

# Anand Prashnottari

(Questions and Answers on Anand)

By

Swami Akhandananda Saraswati

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Introduction

This session of questions, placed by spiritual seekers, and the answers given by Swami Akhandananda Saraswati Maharaj was held in New Delhi in 1984.

Maharajji adopted this method after his vision started to fail. His intention was to answer the questions in the minds of the spiritual seekers. After over fifty years of giving extensive discourses on a variety of our ancient texts and philosophy, Maharajji wanted to give people the opportunity to ask about the doubts that still troubled his listeners all over India. He altered the style of his discourses with this in mind.

: 1 :

Question: Maharajshri, why do we worship Ganeshji before starting any *shubha kaarya* (auspicious work)? Please enlighten us about the *svaroop*a (essence; true form) of Ganapatiji.

Answer: You see, Shiva is *gnaana-svaroop*a (the essence, or form, of Gnan). Uma is *shakti-svaroop*aa (the essence, in feminine form, of power). If we wish to accomplish anything, we need the requisite knowledge and the capability to carry out the work to its satisfactory conclusion.

How will you achieve this unless you have the necessary knowledge? And, how will this be done unless you have the ability – the power – to complete it successfully? Work should be done with a combination of Gnan and Shakti – Shiva and Uma!

There is also a *vishe`shataa* (special factor) of Vedanta in this. Ganeshji was not created by the *dhaatoo* (primary essence) of Shivaji's physical form. Uma created Ganeshji by herself – meaning, the Atma, the Paramatma, is *akhanda* (unfragmented; endless). It is the *nirvikaara* (not subject to deterioration); and Shakti does everything with the *aashraya* (shelter; protection) of the Atma (Paramatma). Thus, Ganesh means the strength and knowledge that is a result of *saamarasya* (both essences in equal proportions) of Shiva and Shakti.

Ganesh means the Ishwara – the ruler – of the *gana* (troop of dependents), like the *indreeya* (five sense organs and five organs of

action), and the *manovritti-gana* (the troop of mental inclinations). Unless they are brought under one leadership, you will not be able to attain success.

This is why Ganesh – or Ganapati – has been said to be the Swami (Master) of both Riddhi (prosperity) and Siddhi (success). When Riddhi and Siddhi are present in the task you undertake, and their Swami is also present, you are sure to succeed in your undertaking.

The indreeyas must be controlled. Suppose you embark on a project and your world goes out of control. What will happen then? If you want to do some research or take on some task, but get involved in sensual indulgences, how will you accomplish the objective you'd set for yourself? If your mind is restless and wayward, how will you work?

That is why Ganeshji is called *ganaadheesha* – the Ishwara of the ganas. That means, He is the Swami of the *manovritti* (mana means the emotional mind, and vritti means inclination).

All work is done after doing the *poojaa* (ritual worship) of Ganeshji.

It is said that when the Samudra Manthan (the churning of the ocean) was done, everything went smoothly by Bhagwan's *kripaa* (Grace). Bhagwan gave the right guidance. He lifted up the Mandarachal Mountain and placed it. He held it firm from above and supported it from below. He sat in the hearts of the Devtas (divine powers) and Danavas (demonic powers), and did the churning. In spite of all this, the Mandarachal kept rising and sinking. Bhagwan said, 'We must do the Ganapati puja first, because unless all the forces are propitiated, some obstacle will come.'

You can understand it this way: this is a *ganatantra* (democracy). If the tantra (system) does not cooperate, blockages will obstruct its

functioning. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the Devtas of Riddhi-Siddhi-Ganapati to be favorable.

Ganeshji's face is the face of an elephant, created jointly by Uma and Shiva. His puja should certainly be done before commencing any undertaking. This gives *mangala* (good fortune).

: 2 :

Question: Maharajshri, why have you changed your style of giving discourses, and started this question-answer style? Is there any special reason for this?

Answer: You see, my eyesight is seriously impaired now. I can neither read nor write. Others have to read out to me. In any case, I never had the habit of doing much writing. All the books that have been published have either been dictated, or transcribed from the recorded talks given by me. This is well known to Pundit Devdharji Sharma.

When a person has to give a *pravachana* (discourse; lecture) on some Shashtra (branch of knowledge), it is necessary for him to study the book and meditate upon its purport. It has been my endeavor, right from the beginning, to not deviate from the subject I am to talk on. I try to ensure that no other topic or irrelevant matter intrudes. This has become difficult for me now.

There is one more reason. There are different kinds of doubts, dilemmas, and questions in people's minds. I have no way of knowing what questions people have. Therefore, if I am sent the questions in writing, and answer them to the best of my ability, it will serve a useful purpose.

It is not that you ask me how a piano, or harmonium, is played, or ask me to predict the future! Please ask me questions relating to Dharma, social and spiritual matters, philosophy, and Tattvagnan (knowledge about the essence of the Brahman). I can certainly help in clarifying these.

Thus, this method of question-answer discourses is for the purpose of establishing a closer relationship with my listeners. You come, sit, listen, and go away. I also go away. However, if you ask me about the points that come to your mind, we will feel closer to each other. This makes the question-answer session a useful and excellent method for clearing ambiguities. Otherwise, the time is spent in my talking on some *grantha* (book; treatise) without your having any opportunity to ask for clarifications on any point.

Our ancient Rishi-Munis and Sadhu-Sants also followed the tradition of giving clarifications only when questions were placed before them.

: 3 :

Question: Maharajshri, what does '*sankalpa*' mean? Please enlighten us on this, and help us to increase our knowledge.

Answer: 'Sankalpa' means, *samyak kalpanaa*. A complete plan of action should be prepared when you want to embark upon any project. In common parlance, sankalpa means a detailed blue-print of the project you wish to undertake. No part of the scheme should be overlooked.

For example, if you want to put up a factory, you need to locate a suitable site. This is *chintana* (giving thought) of the *de'sha* (place). Then comes the chintan of the *kaala* (time), whether the time and situation are favorable or not. The third point is to consider whether your *parampara* (family tradition) has any connection with your project. Do you have any experience or background of the kind of work you plan? If so, you should take advantage of it. The elders and ancestors of your family are to be remembered. After that, your own strength and competence are to be considered. Only then is the method of work to be decided.

In planning the actual implementation of the project, you have to think about the people available to you. From where will you get the laborers you require, whether they will be fit for the kind of work you need them. You will have to recruit efficient and dependable technicians, management staff, accountants, supervisors, and others. You have to plan in detail all the components – manpower, material, etc – you will need for making a success of your venture.

Therefore, in that – which is called a *sankalpa* these days – in which the *de'sha* (place), *kaala* (time), *gotra* (the name of the Rishi who



founded your lineage) and the *svaroopā* (essence; true form) of your karma, the people who will carry out the work, and the estimated time of its completion, are all to be taken into consideration.

Just as a commercial enterprise is started after extensive research and systematic planning, a sankalpa is done for any *karma-kaanda* (a religious ritual done for a specific purpose). It is even stated, in the books of karma-kaanda, that obstacles hamper the project unless a formal sankalpa is done by the person before he starts the ritual.

Therefore, you should do a sankalpa before beginning a ritual, take the advice of elders, and have a complete picture of your undertaking. You should give thought to the circumstances of the place and time, materials and workers, your own strengths and expertise. Unless this is done, you are likely to face any number of problems and difficulties.

This is why our books of Dharma state that there is a great *shakti* (power) in a sankalpa. It is even stated in some places, that if a person's sankalpa-shakti (the power of his resolve) is very strong, the necessary factors become available for him automatically. People come forward to support him, and give guidance if he is confused.

A sankalpa makes our *praana* (life spirit) capable of carrying out the work we have resolved to undertake. It also gives success to our efforts.

: 4 :

Question: It is said that *satkarma* (good actions) enable us to obtain the *parama-pada* (supreme status). Is there any example by which satkarmas have resulted in a person getting the Param Pada?

Answer: Look, my brother, you may have read, or heard, what Shri Krishna said in the Gita.

*‘Karmanaiva hi sansiddhimaasthitaa janakaadayah (3. 20)’*

This means, there have been many Mahapurushas (enlightened Mahatmas) like Raja Janak, who have attained *samyaktva* (enlightenment) through their karmas. According to the Shastras, satkarmas give success, and *loka-paraloka* (the good things in this world and other worlds). The names of Raja Janak and others are given as examples. There are a number of *itihaasa* (historical books like the Mahabharata and Ramayana), and Puranas (mythological books) that also say that *siddhi* (success; achievement) is obtained through satkarmas.

Give your attention to one point. What do you wish to attain through your satkarmas? In what form do you desire the fruits of good actions? Would you feel that you have received the fruits, if you attain a high position in the Government? Would you feel satisfied to get great wealth, or would you feel satisfied if you were sent to Swarga (Paradise)?

The truth is that satkarmas make a person *shaktishaalee* (strong; powerful). All the actions done are connected to the *bhaava* (feeling) of the *kartaa* (doer). Therefore, the true fruit of satkarmas is that our *antahkarana* (subtle body; fourfold mind, comprising of the *mana* =

emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality) becomes *shuddha* (pure; unsullied). We should be careful that nobody is harmed by our karmas. What we do should be beneficial for all. We should work for the good of all. That is the real fruit of satkarmas. When such a feeling of benevolence rises in the antahkarana, it is the fruit of good deeds.

Satkarmas do not keep sweets ready for you to eat in Swarga! Nor do they make you a Minister within a few years! The fruit of satkarmas is that our habits are improved, our life is improved, and our mental inclinations are improved. It is also a fruit of satkarmas when you live and help others to live; that you do not fear death, nor make others fear death.

*Gnaanapradhaana satkarma* (good actions dominated by Gnan) is that you do not cheat anyone, don't make a fool of anyone; you don't get cheated, and you help others to get Gnan (wisdom; spiritual knowledge), and increase your own Gnan.

Similarly, *aanandapradhaana satkarma* (good actions dominated by joy) is when you do not become unhappy, nor make anyone unhappy. You remain happy and help to spread happiness. Moreover, you don't cause friction between people.

The human being is a species, identified by its human form. If we reflect upon this, we get great inspiration. All humans have two feet, two arms, two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, and the face is in front. This tells us how much we have in common.

You can say that this is the creation of Prakriti (Nature), or you can say that Bhagwan has created us. And yet we keep creating

differences amongst ourselves. We try to increase our own power to influence others. We misuse the powers we possess.

The greatest fruit of satkarmas is that our focus should be on the Ishwara's *advaita satta* (non-dual, indivisible, pure existence) that is present in all, and that none of our actions should be prompted by *raaga-dve'sha* (attachments-aversions) and *bhaya-shoka* (fear-sorrow).

The first fruit of satkarmas is that our life, heart, and thoughts all become *pavitra* (pure according to the Shastras). The fruit of satkarmas is not limited to becoming the ruler of some place, or becoming a Devta (divine power) in Swarga. It is a far loftier fruit!

There remains the question, from where do we get the urge for satkarma? The answer is, the urge rises in the heart. Examine your heart and see how much *sadbhaava* (benevolence), how much *sadvichaara* (good thoughts) it contains, that prompt you to do good deeds. Satkarma deposits its special quality in the place it arises, and this is what is called 'Dharma'.

Question: Maharajji, what is the *saadhana* (method) for getting Bhagwan's bhakti (loving devotion for Bhagwan)? What effort can we make to obtain bhakti?

Answer: When a couple get married, *pre`ma* (pure love) develops between the husband and wife. When friends meet, a strong bond of affection builds up. Similarly, if you want to have prema for Bhagwan, associate with people who have prema for him.

The company you keep should be that of bhaktas who have love for Bhagwan. If you associate with people who drink, gamble, indulge in violence etc, bhakti will hesitate to come into your heart.

Thus, the first point is to keep the company of bhaktas. See for yourself, what kind of people do you mingle with? Who do you consider to be a better human being than yourself? And, who do you follow? Think about these points and then mix with the kind of people who are what you wish to become. This will elevate you. It is like many unlit lamps being lit by touching the wick of a burning lamp to the unlit wicks. If a true bhakta comes into your life the flame of bhakti can brighten your heart.

Now remains the question of whose bhakti you wish to have. Listen to descriptions of the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of the one whose bhakti you want to develop. If you get the chance, listen repeatedly! Talk about Him if you find a listener. If you don't get either, sing Bhagwan's *bhajans* (devotional songs) by yourself. Just as children sing film songs in the bathroom, you should hum His songs when you are alone.

When you see Bhagwan's *svabhaava* (nature; temperament) feelings of inadequacy will cease to trouble you. Bhakti's greatest gift is that a person can give up his *paapa* (sins), *taapa* (suffering), the feeling of lacking, and remorse, on the strength of Bhagwan, by taking *aashraya* (refuge) in Him.

Therefore, if you want to get bhakti, it is necessary that you get the association of Sants (true Mahatmas) and meditate on Bhagwan's svaroop and svabhava.

Just think of Bhagwan's great compassion! He lifts even a vulture on His lap. He gives *kalyaana* (salvation) to Marich, and bestows Grace on Putana. So, don't feel hopeless or sad – meditate on Bhagwan's qualities. Think about His beauty, form, qualities, magnanimity, gentleness, and His *leela* (divine play). The Bhagwan who accepts Kubaja – won't He accept you, too? Remove any kind of impossibility from your mind. This is the *mahima* (greatness) of Bhagwan's *roopa* (form).

The mahima of Bhagwan's *naama* (name) is such that it gave salvation to Ajamil. You should not have any doubts, that He showers Grace on some, and leaves others out arbitrarily!

Thus, thinking about Bhagwan's svaroop, svabhava, *guna* (good qualities), roopa and leela, and the nature of His bhaktas, going to pilgrimages to His *dhaama* (the place where He lived when He came in an Avatar), and doing *japa* (ritual chanting) of His name, are all helpful in strengthening bhakti.

Now, regarding your question about whether bhakti can be obtained through *prayatna* (personal effort), I ask you a question – don't you have bhakti in your heart? Don't you have loving devotion for your father? Don't you have bhakti for your Acharya (Teacher)? Don't you

have bhakti for the leaders of your country? My brother, don't you have bhakti even for your body? Yes! Bhakti is surely there, somewhere or other. The reflection of our *aananda-svaroop*a (the essence of the Self that is pure bliss) glimmers in every *antahkarana* (subtle body; fourfold mind, comprised on the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = subtle pride of individuality). The antahkarana becomes *raseela*a (filled with sweetness) because of bhakti.

Where do you want to obtain this *rasa* (sweetness) from? Who do you want to give it to? If you want to obtain rasa from – and give it to – this *sansara*a (interactive temporal world), you will definitely have to part from this world sooner or later. Either the object of your devotion will leave you, or you will have to leave it.

However, if your source of happiness is in your *hridaya* (heart) – if it is the Atmadeva (the Ishwara in your heart; the Parameshwara who abides in all hearts), you can be absolutely free of fear. That Bhagwan will appear in your *dhyana*a (meditation), and you will be able to see His name, form, leela and dham in your mind's eye. If you make these your refuge, you will be able to save your love from getting trapped in any worldly object. You will be safe from being cheated, or hurt, by this world.

If you wish to increase the bhakti in your heart, you can make your bhakti *poorna* (complete; total) by meditating on the Parameshwara who is in your heart. Think about His essence, His nature, His *prabhaava* (the effect He has on everything), His *anubhaava* (authority), His wonderful qualities, His form, and His frolics. Do everything with the feeling that you are doing His *se'vaa* (service), and chant His name. Bhakti does not come from outside. It is already

present in your heart, but it is not at the level Goswami Tulsidasji wants. He says:

*Kaamihi naari piyaari jimi lobhihi priya jimi daama,*

*timi raghunaatha nirantara priya laagahu mohi raama.*

(Just as a woman is extremely dear to a lustful man, and money to a greedy man, Raghunath, please let me love You like that.)

It is written in the Vishnu Purana:

*Yaa preetiravive`kaanaam vishaye`shvarapaayinee (1. 20. 19)*

The meaning of this is, if you have the kind of love for Bhagwan that you have for the fleeting transient objects of this world, you will get all good fortune.

Oh! You can see Bhagwan whenever you want; He abides in your heart! The *mana* (emotional mind) that keeps you thinking about the *preeya-apreeya* (things dear to you – things you don't like) while you are awake, and the objects you see while you are dreaming, the beautiful music you hear, the delicious flavors you taste, and the fragrances you inhale in your dreams – if your mind starts day dreaming about Bhagwan, His bhakti will certainly rise in your heart.

However, if you think, 'I don't need to put in an effort for Bhagwan's bhakti. There is no particular urgency for it; Bhagwan will give me bhakti when He wants,' you can go on waiting! It may take eons of time!

But, if you give your love the right direction, towards Bhagwan and your inner world, all your worldly sorrows will be destroyed. You will become *sukhi* (happy). If there is anything that has the capacity to make life filled with happiness and serenity, it is Bhagwan's bhakti. It



has the power to enable you to experience *paramaananda* (supreme happiness).

Question: Maharajshri, since Bhagwan abides in all hearts, what is the weakness in humans, that makes people get involved in wrongdoing? Doesn't the Paramatma – who is the *aatma-svaroop*a (essence or form of our Atma) – have the responsibility of stopping us from doing things that are wrong? Under the circumstances, would it be inappropriate to say that it is Bhagwan who prompts us into wrong actions, just as it is He who prompts us into doing good deeds?

Answer: Look; the hands of the Paramatma are so strong that even if all the weakness of this world were to manifest simultaneously, they could not harm a human being in any way. Therefore, you should have complete faith in the *shakti* (power; strength) of the Paramatma. There is no cause to find fault with it.

Bhagwan is an ocean of compassion. He showers Grace on all, unconditionally. I will give you an example.

There was a Raja. He supported a number of schools, visiting them occasionally. On one such visit, he noticed a student who has an outstanding personality. The boy was handsome and healthy. He looked intelligent and noble. The Raja was childless. He resolved mentally to make this boy his heir.

The Raja instructed the Headmaster to ensure that the boy was given the best training and teaching, and he would bear all the expenses. He also warned the Headmaster that nobody, including the boy himself, should get to know about this arrangement.

When the boy completed his studies, the Raja sent an escort to bring the boy to the Royal Court. At first the boy felt nervous, but when he reached the Court, the Raja told him to come up and sit on the empty throne next to his own, on the dais. The Raja spoke lovingly to the boy, welcoming him. 'You are my adopted son, and heir to the Kingdom,' he said. Till that moment, the boy had no idea whatever, that the Raja even knew of his existence! He knew only that he was a poor boy who had to work hard and make his own way in life.

When he learnt that he was to inherit the throne, the words of Shri Krishna became a reality for him.

*Sarvabhootaanaam gnaatvaa maam shaantimrichhati. (Gita 5. 29)*

(My bhaktas obtain inner tranquility when they know that I am the well-wisher of all, and shower Grace without any cause.)

Thus, Bhagwan showers Grace on all. It is we who are unable to experience the Grace, because of the faults in our *antahkarana* (fourfold mind comprising of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality).

To understand what prompts us into wrongdoing in spite of having Bhagwan's grace, you have to see how electricity works. Electricity activates a variety of machines. It causes the fan to turn and create a breeze for us. It lights up the bulb, enabling us to see in the dark. It enhances the volume through a loud speaker, heats the water in the geyser, and enables other equipment to function. All these machines work because of the power of the electricity.

However, if there is some fault in a machine, it can cause a fire. It can make harsh rattling noises. The work cannot be completed. There is

no fault in the Power Station that supplies the electricity; the fault is in the machine.

The antahkarana functions according to the individual's *vaasanaa* (avid desires; strong urges). One person likes to work, another likes to make money, a third enjoys sword play, and a fourth likes to chant Vedic verses. People's actions are prompted by their individual temperaments. People are like machines activated by the *sattaa* (authority; existence) that is the Ishwara. When a person wants that his heart should change, Bhagwan changes it. If you want that no wrong action comes into your life, no wrong thoughts or urges arise in your mind, Bhagwan will surely give you the strength to succeed.

To achieve this, pray to Bhagwan when you wake up in the morning. 'Prabhu! Let me not do anything wrong today, or in future.' And when you go to bed at night, think about how the day was spent, and examine whether any bad thought came into your mind. If you have had bad thoughts, ask Bhagwan to forgive you. Touch His feet mentally, and make a vow that no bad thoughts will be allowed to come the next day. Keep a check on yourself during the day, to make sure that you don't do anything that can cause hurt or harm to any.

It is vital that you keep checking these things and praying to Bhagwan that the wrong actions that creep into your life are stopped. If you make a firm resolve for this, bad thoughts will stop coming.

However, Bhagwan always gives the fruit of wrong actions done knowingly and deliberately. He gives people the freedom to choose their actions. He gives us scope to play and work as we wish. Then, just as a mother puts her baby in a tub of hot water and gives him a thorough scrubbing when he gets dirty, Bhagwan also does the work of cleansing the *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul).

Therefore, let go of the idea that Bhagwan makes you do wrong things. Try to correct the tendencies that lead you into doing things that are wrong. Pray to the Ishwara to enable you to remain firm in your resolve to be good and do what is right.

Question: Maharajshri, it is said that Bhagwan's eyes are continuously showering Grace on all beings. If that be the case, why don't we experience His Grace the way we experience the breeze, fire, and water? Why don't we get His *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience)?

Answer: My brother, the reason for this is that people want Bhagwan's *kripaa* (Grace) to come in the form of what they desire. They say that it will be Bhagwan's kripa if we never fall ill; it will be Bhagwan's kripa if we get great wealth; it will be His kripa if we are given a high position. People don't leave themselves in Bhagwan's hands; they want His kripa to come in the form of their desires being fulfilled.

However, this is not the characteristic of Bhagwan's kripa. Kripa comes, sometimes in the form of bitter medicine and sometimes in the form of sweet medicine. It comes in making you go hungry, and it comes in your getting a delicious meal. It can come as a punishment and it can come as pampering. That is why it is a mistake to see Bhagwan's kripa only in the form of that, which we want.

The right attitude is to see that Bhagwan's kripa is inherent in whatever happens, because sometimes He does kripa by giving us something agitating!

Just as a *roti* (unleavened bread) is cooked on a hot iron plate, and flipped over so that both sides are well-cooked, and cool buttermilk is sprinkled on it to make it tasty, Bhagwan's kripa comes in the form of the heat as well as cooling buttermilk. We feel that Bhagwan's kripa is not showered on us because we don't recognize His kripa

unless it comes in the form we like. Once we learn to recognize His kripa, we will see that it is showering constantly on all, and in every situation. This recognition comes only when we let go of our worldly desires, and continue to walk on whichever path He leads our life to.

Remember the words Mahatma Haridas spoke at Vrindavan, hundreds of years ago, during the reign of Akbar:

*Jyonhi jyonhi rakhiyata hau, tyonhi tyonhi rahiyata haun, he` hari.*

(O Hari! As You keep me, so I live, accepting whatever comes.)

People who learn to recognize Bhagwan's kripa are happy under all circumstances. They never feel, 'Bhagwan is so merciful – then why is He doing this?' They see only His Grace in every situation.

So, put in some effort to recognize Bhagwan's kripa. Goswami Tulsidasji wrote, 'Prabhu's *moorati* (image) is composed of kripa,' because he saw Bhagwan's kripa in everything that happened.

When you learn to recognize Bhagwan and His kripa, you will see that His kripa is flowing like the Ganga; it heaves like the ocean. A cool, refreshing breeze of kripa is blowing constantly. The music of His kripa is everywhere. Your whole life becomes filled with the awareness of His Grace. This world has become Vaikuntha (Bhagwan's Vishnu's divine realm).

However, as long as you don't recognize Bhagwan's kripa, you are likely to feel that His kripa is cruel. A little baby cries when his mother gives him a bath. She does it for his good, but he thinks she is being cruel. This is why we must make an effort to learn to recognize Bhagwan's kripa, even in death, disease, poverty, or any other form of suffering. Once you obtain the ability to recognize it, you will find that all Creation is filled with kripa!

Question: Maharajshri, what is the definition of Hinduttva (Hinduism)? How old is it, and what are its special qualities?

Answer: Look, my brother, the pattern of our thinking is *shaastreeya* (related to the Shastras, our ancient books on Dharma). The Vedas are meant for all the human races, and they are *apaurushe`ya*, meaning, they are not written by any human, they are the eternal truths that come from a higher source. None of the ancient texts – the Mahabharata, the Valmiki Ramayana, or any of the Puranas, the books of Nyaya, Mimansa, or Dharma Shastras that represent the Hindu philosophy contain any description of any *jaati* (caste; race) or *sampradaaya* (religious sect started by an individual) – contain any description of, or reference to Hinduttva. I state this with full responsibility.

Swami Dayananda had considerable difficulty in extracting the word ‘Aryan’ from the Vedas. I saw the great efforts made by the Pundits of Kashi (Varanasi) in creating the Varnashram Swaraj Sangh. (Varna means the four classes of society and Ashram means the four stages of life. Swaraj means self-rule, and Sangh means an Association.) Karpatreyji Maharaj also put in a great effort to create the Societies of ‘Dharma Sangh’ and ‘Rama Rajya’.

What I mean to say is, we cannot use our traditional inheritance to use the name ‘Hindu’ to segregate ourselves from other Dharmas (religious schools of thought).

Hinduism is such a name – such a Dharma – that it encompasses the entire human race within itself. To define the word ‘Hindu’ you can say that that, which is essentially *bhaarateeya* (Indian), traditionally



Indian, a person who has faith and belief in the principles of our ancient Indian philosophy, and who does not consider himself to be a follower of any other Dharma, is a Hindu. Only a person who does not consider himself to be a follower of any other religion can be considered a Hindu.

However, the root of Dharma is essentially one, and that is *Sat-chit-ananda* (pure existence-pure consciousness-pure happiness) – meaning, *sattaa* (existence), Gnan (knowledge and wisdom), and *adviteeyataa* (being the non-dual Brahman)!

The recent disputes that have arisen in the name of Dharma are prompted by political considerations. The traditional Dharma passed down from generation to generation among the tribal people of remote forest and mountain regions is still practiced according to their individual traditions. They believe it to be Dharma.

Apart from this, some people believe a *grantha* (religious book) to be the root of Dharma, and some believe in their *paigambara* (Prophet; Apostle), or the son of the Ishwara. Thus, there are many forms that are accepted as the bases of Dharma. The fact remains, however, that the *shakti* (power) that enables us to restrain ourselves from wrongdoing is the shakti of Dharma.

It is written in the Mahabharata, '*dhaaranaat dharmah*' – that, which stays in our heart and stops our eyes from straying, prevents the hand from doing anything it shouldn't, is Dharma. Dharma won't allow our feet to go where we should not go, or let our tongue say what should not be said. Manuji has also given the greatest importance to that Dharma, which is the upholder of righteousness. He has written:

*Dhritih kshamaa damam aste`yam shauchamindriyanigraha,*

*Dheervidyasatyamakrodham dashakam dharmalakshanam.*

*(Manu Smriti 6. 92)*

Dhriti is the shakti that does *dhaaranaa* (upholds; perseveres). It controls our *indreeya* (the five senses and five organs of actions) and *manovritti* (mental inclinations), applying the brake when they tend to go astray. This is the *dhaaraka shakti* (the power that restrains), and Dharma (eternal righteousness) should not be made the cause of religious friction. It should be the means of creating universal goodwill and amity. '*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah*' (Mahabharata, Vana Parva, 312. 128). Dharma itself protects the person who protects his own Dharma sincerely.

A big theological discussion was once held on this subject. You may have heard that the Maharaja of Indore had married a foreigner. The Shankaracharya of that region had conducted the ritual for the *shuddhi* (purification) of the Maharani. The orthodox people had objected strongly to this. On that occasion, the most learned scholars of the country had been gathered to discuss the issue. The question was – *kim naama hinduttva* – what is the definition of Hinduttva?

During the discussion, it was asked, 'Is it Hinduttva to have a *choti* (sacred tuft of hair)? Sanyasis do not keep a choti; are they not Hindu? If a Hindu is one who wears a *yagnopaveeta* (sacred thread), then will the Sanyasis who give up their sacred thread no longer be Hindu?'

Every point that was raised was negated logically. I have no wish to go into details, because it will not have a positive effect on your thinking; I just want you to know that all the external definitions of Hinduism were shown to be inapplicable.

Ultimately, they reached the conclusion that a Hindu is one who follows the traditional teachings given by our ancient Indian Acharyas (Masters), but even this point was cut away at the root, because there are thousands of communities in our vast country, who have not even heard the names of the Acharyas! In fact, some of our *dhaarmika vidvaana* (scholars of religious books) haven't even heard the name of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Our Sadhus don't go to visit their center.

The Atharva Veda states, '*Bahudhaa vivaachasam (12. 1. 45)*' – our country is so vast that it has many religious sects, and several groups, who speak different languages. The definition we make apply generally to the areas round Delhi, Mathura, Ayodhya, etc.

However, such definitions serve only to separate us from the all-pervading essence of the Hindu philosophy. You can ask yourself – aren't the Buddhists and Jains Hindu? They do not believe in the existence of the Ishwara. Nor do they believe in the teachings of the Vedas. They accept neither the Brahmins nor the Sanyasis; or even that taking a bath in the Gangaji purifies the mind. But, do you wish to separate them from the Hindu Dharma on these points?

No. Please don't do that! Let go of your narrow outlooks and understand that a human being who has all the good qualities recommended by all religious schools of thought, has faith in the Ishwara, believes in the teachings of the Vedas, and leads a pure and ethical life, is a Hindu.

All the different books and Acharyas are meant to make *manavataa* (the highest human qualities) *poorna* (complete). The new castes and religious sects that are created are just like political parties created to increase their own vote-banks. These groups work with a similar goal of increasing their following.

Hinduttva is something that is immensely vast and magnanimous.  
The fact is, Hinduttva is what the Parameshwara's *hridaya* (heart) is!

Question: Maharajji, please tell us about some *aadhyaatmika* (pertaining to the spiritual) incident that happened in your life, and had a great impact on you, and by which we can get inspiration. Please also tell us about some reminiscences about the Sants (Mahatmas).

Answer: Look, my brother, I feel great diffidence in narrating my personal experiences. All I can say is that I have had, since my childhood up to the present time, opportunities to spend a lot of time among Sants, and get their Satsang (spiritual discourses and discussions). Therefore, whatever I have is their *kripaa-prasaada* (the sanctified substance of their Grace). I have been inspired by many Sants, and I can never forget the impact their lives have made on mine.

When I was about fifteen, I had gone to a Sadhu – he is over a hundred now! He told me to do a specific number of *asana* (Yogic exercises) and *praanaayaama* (Yogic breathing exercises). I told him that the effort was too much for me. This displeased him greatly.

‘You are a Brahmin, you are a healthy young man – if you don’t do asana-pranayama will animals do them?’ He rebuked me so sharply that it had a lifelong impact on me.

There was a fakir (wandering Monk). He had the habit of giving *gaalee* (abusing with foul language). One day, he was in a good mood. I asked him, ‘Maharaj, why do you give gaalis?’

My question displeased him. ‘Look,’ he said. ‘You are still very young; you aren’t even twenty years old! If you find it intolerable to be

abused, well, your whole life is before you! God knows how many people will abuse you, insult you, talk ill of you, and find fault with you. How will you endure all these? If you endure my gaalis without getting agitated, you will develop the equanimity and tolerance to face all these.'

Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj had once told me, 'When anyone undertakes to do benevolent deeds, the beneficiary gets benefits, but the benefactor gets a much greater benefit. He develops good habits in his life. His nature is improved. The effect on the mind of the person who does good deeds leads to his leading an excellent life. So, you should always develop a habit of doing good.'

There are many more points that I have heard from the lips of enlightened Mahatmas. I will tell you about them some day, if the opportunity comes.

Question: Maharajji, how does the *nirguna-niraakaara* (without attributes; without form) *sarva-vyaapee* (all-pervading) Brahma descend as the *saguna-saakaara* (with attributes-with form) Ishwara?

Answer: *Agni* (fire) is all-pervading. It is present in *jala* (water), *prithivee* (earth), and even in the *vaayu* (air) that touches us. It is present in the vast *aakaasha* (space; sky) in which we move. The *te`jas tattva* (essence of effulgence) is present in the *pancheekrita* (combination of five elements) of space, air, water, earth and fire.

However, fire manifests when a wooden matchstick is scraped against the chemicals on the side of a matchbox. The latent fire had no form – it was nirakara – but it appeared when the match scraped the chemicals.

In the same way, when the love of a bhakta (one who has loving devotion for Bhagwan) is intensified, when Devki begins to focus on when the nirakara-nirguna Brahman will come into her lap in the form of the baby Krishna, when Mother Yashoda becomes desperate to have Him as her son, when the cowherd boys long for Shri Krishna to come and play with them, when the *gopee* (milkmaids) yearn for His presence as their Beloved, and Kausalya-Aditi pray that they may soon see Him as their son, their hearts take on such a form that the nirguna-nirakara descends, and establishes His whole *bhagavattaa* (divine qualities of Bhagwan).

The second point is, nobody believes that our Atma is *saakaara* (with form) – none of the philosophies – Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Yoga, Sankhya, Mimansa, or Vedanta – speak of an Atma with form. They

all believe the Atma to be formless. It manifests as the *shareera* (gross physical form) by getting attached to the *antahkarana* (subtle body; fourfold mind). In the same way, the nirguna-nirakara-nirvikara (without attributes-formless-not subject to deterioration) Parabrahm Paramatma becomes sakara. You may remember this *chaupaayee* (couplet) of Tulsidasji:

*Jo gunarahita saguna so kaise`,*

*Jala hima upala vilaga nahin jaise`.*

Just as water is not separate from a block of ice, the nirakara and the sakara are not separate substances.

That being the case, it is not impossible for Bhagwan to take on a form with attributes, by combining Himself with His unimaginable, indefinable, Shakti (power).

Bhagwan manifests because of His infinite Grace, because of the *bhaava* (deep feelings) of His bhaktas. Another reason is when there is a desperate need in the *samashti* (whole of Creation) for some changes to take place, when Prakriti (Nature) turns away from the *prapancha* (interactive world) and turns towards Bhagwan. Then, Bhagwan Himself Graces the world by coming into the Kingdom of Prakriti, in spite of being *a-praakrita* (not created by Nature).

If you read the Darshan Shastras (the books of the six schools of thought) you will be aware that the Nyaya, Vaisheshika, etc believe the Atma-Paramatma to be nirakara, but when the Acharyas (Teachers who founded the school of thought) say the *mangalaacharana* (auspicious opening verses) they make statements like the one given below:

*Nootana-jaladhara-ruchaye` gopavadhooteedukoola-chauraaya,*



*tasmai krishnaaya namah sasaaramaheeruhasya beejaaya.*

*(Bhashaparichhe`da. Ka. 1)*

The person who composed this shloka was a great *taarkika* (theologist). He was a great Naiyayika (believer of the Nyaya school), and competent to establish the principle of the Vaisheshika Darshan. Even a Mahapurusha like him says, in his mangalacharan, ‘He, whose form has the luster of freshly formed rain clouds, and who steals the garments of the little milk-maidens, I salute that supremely attractive, supremely sweet *chitta-chora* (one who captivates my thoughts). I bow down to Him, who is the seed of the tree of this world.’

When even such learned persons of the Sects that believe in the nirakara accept that Bhagwan is all-knowing, all-powerful, and supremely compassionate, the formless Brahman manifests as Bhagwan with form and attributes, and bestows *kalyaana* (salvation) on people, what is so surprising about this?

Science has developed many wonderful methods of changing the formless into tangible objects. No learned person should be surprised at the Brahman manifesting in a form. When even formless matter can be transformed into solid objects, what is there to be surprised at the one source of illumination, and the substratum of the infinite, unimaginable attributes that gives salvation, Prabhu, coming as a saguna-sakara Avatar?

Let us see it from both sides. One is the *avatarana avataaraha* – the Avatar that descends into our buddhi, our intellect. Our buddhi has become entranced by the constant vision of the external interactive world, and the pleasures it offers. It should gradually be immersed

into the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of Bhagwan. This is one reason for Bhagwan's taking an Avatar.

The second reason is Bhagwan's voluntary acceptance to take an Avatar for the good of the world. The opinion of the bhaktas goes even further. They believe that the *aakriti* (forms) of Bhagwan's Avatars are eternal. Goloka (Shri Krishna's divine realm), Saket (Shri Rama's divine realm), Vaikuntha (Bhagwan Vishnu's realm), Shivaloka (Shivaji's realm), and Deviloka (the realm of the Brahman's female form) are all eternal. So much so that His forms as Matsya (fish), Kachapa (tortoise), Varaha (boar) and Nrisimha (half man, half lion) Avatars are also eternal in their own divine realms.

Give a little thought, and ask yourself whether the creations of these forms are accidental. Aren't the different trees like Vata and Peepal inherent in their seeds? The fact is that the forms seen by us have their own seeds, and are present even while they are still in seed form. When the seed softens, swells and throws out a shoot, the leaves and branches and fruits are not seen in the shoot; they appear in due course.

Similarly, there are many Acharyas who accept the different forms we see in this world, as being eternal. So, please don't feel amazed about these things. The Atmadeva (the Atma that is not separate from the Brahman) is *svayama-prakaasha* (self-effulgent). It takes the *aashraya* (shelter; protection) of *vimarsha* (deliberation), and appears in all the forms.

It is a strange fact that this question never rises in people's minds, because we believe the Ishwara to be the *abhinna-nimitta-upaadaana* (the cause that is the instrument as well as matter of this Creation). We believe that He is the potter as well as the clay. It is He who creates, and He who becomes all the forms in this world.

No other religion in the world shares this belief – it is the exclusive feature of the Vedic principle that it sees one fundamental Tattva (essence) in everything that exists.

The Vedic principle says that He is Sat (pure existence), He is Chit (pure consciousness), and He is Ananda (pure joy). From the *aananda-ansha* (portion that is anand) comes *priyataa* (the feeling of being dear), from the *chit-ansha* (the part that is consciousness) comes Gnan, and from the *sad-ansha* (the part that exists in gross form) come all the tangible objects and all forms. These three parts – Sat, Chit, Anand – are not separate; they are one. Our One Ishwara is the ‘*sarva khalvidam brahman*’ (*Chandogya Upanishad* 3. 14. 1), ‘*Sadidam sarvam*’ and ‘*chid heedam sarvam*’ (*Nrisimha Upanishad* part 2, 7-8), ‘*brahmaive`dam amritam purastaat*’ (*Chandogya Upanishad* 7. 25. 2), ‘*sade`va purastaat*’ (*Nrisimha Upanishad* 9).

Nothing exists, except that one Parabrahm Paramatma. It is He who manifests in the forms of the earth, water, fire, etc. And, it is He who manifests in the forms of trees, creepers, animals, birds, etc. To doubt His capacity to transform His formless essence into the infinite variety of matter with form is to deny His unimaginable powers.

This is natural from the viewpoint of those who believe in the *adviteeya* (non-dual Brahman being the substratum of all that exists). The Upanishads have described His unimaginable shakti, and thus, His appearing in gross forms is in no way illogical.

Take some time to ponder on this magnanimous outlook of the Vedas – ‘*e`kam vai sad vibabhoova sarvam*’ (*Rig Veda* 8. 52. 2), which means, it is the one Sat that appears in all forms. Or, ‘*e`kam sad vipraa bahudhaa vadanti*’ (1. 164. 46), which means, there is only one Sat in our principle. He is nirguna (without attributes) as well as saguna (with attributes). He is nirakara (formless) as well as sakara

(with form). All beings – humans, animals, birds, Devtas, the greenery, earth, water, fire, etc that are seen – are His forms.

You read in the Gita about who is the *sootra* (origin) of that, which we refer to as the interactive world. It is the Paramatma. Similarly, you also read in the Gita, '*tvayaa tatam vishvamanantaroopam*' (11. 38), which means, 'This whole world is filled with You.'

You read, '*Mayaa tatamidam sarvam*' (9. 4), which means, 'This whole world is filled with Me, the way ice is filled with water.'

The meaning of all these sentences is that everything is the Paramatma.

When we speak of the Paramatma who has these characteristics, it does not mean that He only sits in some remote seventh Heaven, watching all that goes on in our world; that He never lifts up a person who has fallen into a pit, that He doesn't uplift the fallen of this world or help a backward person to progress. What is the use of a Parameshwara who does not help us in our life?

It is true that Samadhi (a state of deep meditation) separated us from worldly interaction, and being immersed in bhakti (loving devotion for Bhagwan) has the same effect. However, our *tattvagnaana* (knowledge about the essence of the Brahman) is bent on interacting vigorously in this world. Apply your mind to these words of the Gita:

*Hattvaapi sa imaanllokaan na hanti na nibadhyate` (18. 17)*

(When a person has risen beyond the subtle pride of being the doer of his actions, he does not incur sin, even if he kills someone.)

*Sarvathaa vartamaanopi na sa bhooyobhijaayate` (13. 23)*

(When a person knows the Purusha that is the Atma in the individual, and the Prakriti that is the Purusha's power of Creation, he carries out his work, but is not reborn.)

*Sa sarvavid bhajati maama sarvabhaave`na bhaaratata (15. 19)*

(The Gnani who knows My essence as the Purushottam worships Me lovingly with his every action.)

*Yo maama pashyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pashyati,*

*tasyaaham na pranashyaami sa cha me`na pranashyati (6.30)*

(The person who sees Me as the Atma that pervades all beings, and sees all beings as abiding in Me, sees Me constantly. Neither am I out of his sight, nor is he out of My sight.)

Similarly, see the Samhita (collection of Mantras) of the Vedas and the Upanishads. Where the Paramatma is accepted as the *abhinna-nimitta-upaadaana* (the cause that is the instrument as well as the substance of this Creation) there is nothing illogical about His having attributes and a form. When the Paramatma exists in all forms, you can render service to any being, offer water to a Tulsi shrub, or worship a Peepal tree, or a cow, with the feeling of serving Him. Oh, women-men-children-aged people are all forms of the Paramatma. 'Tvam stree tvam pumaanasi tvam kumara uta vaa kumaaree (Svetashvara Upanishad 4. 3)'. Where else is the Paramatma's *svaroopaa* (essence; true form) described thus? Just lift your heart above all constricted concepts and obtain His *darshan* (see a revered object) everywhere, in all.

Question: Maharajshri, what is a simple method for obtaining *aatmagnaana* (Gnan about the Atma; enlightenment)?

Answer: There should, first of all, be a wish to obtain Atmagnan. Then you should do Satsang (listen to and assimilate the spiritual talks) of Mahatmas who you believe to be enlightened Mahatmas.

*Aatmaalaabhaat na param vidyate`.* (Apada Dharma Sutra 1. 22. 2)

*Yam labdhvaa chaaparam laabham manyate` naadhikam tatah.*  
(Gita 6. 22)

(Atmagnan is the supreme benefit.)

As per these statements, the benefits that come from Atmagnan should be firmly established in the mind. You must have unwavering faith that the Atma is the only Satya (eternal existence; ultimate reality).

There are people in this world who have declared unequivocally, that the Ishwara does not exist. However, nobody can say, 'I do not exist.' This negation is also based on experience – we should have the experience of the 'not' of the presence, or existence, of what we declare 'is not'. Furthermore, nobody can refute the fact that the one who experiences the presence or absence of something, is the Atma.

There are people who refute the existence of the *prapancha* (gross interactive world), created the *shoonya* (void), and people who reject the existence of the Ishwara. It is not possible for you to claim, 'I do not exist', and continue to think and talk! This is an undeniable fact!

And, to whom will the Ishwara give darshan (show Himself) if nobody exists? Shiva can come and Vishnu can come to give you Darshan, but how will you see them if you don't exist?

Therefore, the Atmasatya (the ultimate reality that is the Atma) is the eternal Satya, and it is a Satya that cannot be negated. The surprising factor is that we want to know about so many other things, but have no desire to know ourselves!

This whole world rises and wallows in the ocean of sweetness that is the Atma, but neither is it aware of this, nor does it see it. This world is like the mirage of a lake in a desert. The happiness and sorrow people experience in this world are illusionary. The Atma is the only Satya.

The 'Bhamati Prasthan' states, '*Nahi jaatu kashchit atra sandigdhe` aham vaa naaham ve`tti*'. The implicit belief, 'I do not exist' can never come to anybody. A person may imagine that he will not exist in future, or that he did not exist in the past, but no sensible being can say, 'I do not exist'. A person who has a desire to know this Satya, a Satya that can never be negated by time, place or matter, is blessed indeed!

The method of obtaining Atmagnan is to associate with those who have this Gnan. When you give up the feeling of the existence of anything else, apart from the Atma, your *raaga-dve'sha* (attachments-aversions) will no longer seem valid. Then, your *antahkarana* (fourfold mind comprised of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations and *ahankaara* = subtle pride of individuality) will be bright and pure. It will develop the ability to get a glimpse of the Atma reflected in the heart.

Therefore, my brother, do the *vive`ka* (discrimination; separation) of the *nitya-anitya* (eternal-transient), *satya-asatya* (true-false), *sukha-dukha* (happiness-sorrow), *gnaana-agnaana* (knowledge-ignorance) etc, and become detached from everything that is contrary to the *nitya*.

Uphold the qualities of *shaanti* (tranquility), *daanti* (restrain of the senses), *uparati* (absence of interest in worldly matters), *titikshaa* (endurance), *shraddhaa* (faith in Bhagwan), and *samaadhaana* (realizing the ultimate truth) in your antahkarana.

If you have a desire to be free of worldly achievements, Yoga (yoking yourself to the Ishwara), Dharma (instituted religion), and even the fruits of Dharma – if you have an intense urge for *mumukshaa* (freedom from the cycle of rebirth) – you should take the *sharana* (refuge) of a Sadguru (enlightened Mahatma who will be your spiritual guide). You should do *shravana-manana-nididhyaasana* (listen to and grasp the purport of spiritual discourses – reflect upon what you have heard – bring your mind back repeatedly to the object of your meditation). The day will come when just hearing a *mahaa-vaakya* (ultimate statement of the Vedas) like ‘Tattvamasi’ (*Tat* = That, the Brahman, *Tvam* = you, the Atma, *asi* = are; which means, you are the Atma that is the Brahman) will give rise to the *vritti* (mental inclination) that will destroy all *avidyaa* (ignorance; nescience).

This is the method for obtaining Atmagnan.



Question: Maharajshri, why is Bhagwan's *naama* (name) considered to be greater than Bhagwan himself? The naam is a noun; how can it be greater than the person whose name it is?

Answer: The main thing is, what would be the capability of the One whose name it is? Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has written a shloka:

*Naamnaamakaari bahudhaa nijasarvashakti tatraarpitaa niyamitah  
smarane`na kaalah,*

*e`taadrishee                      tava                      kripaa                      bhagavanmamaapi  
durdaivameedrishamihaajani naanuraagah.*

*(Shikshaashtaka)*

Mahaprabhu is saying, 'See the cause of the greatness. Bhagwan is one, but His names are many; and each name of His has the same *shakti* (power) that Bhagwan has! Bhagwan has placed all His shakti in every name of His. Furthermore, there is no restriction of time, regarding taking His name. You can take His name while doing your work, at home and outside, morning and evening – at any time.'

Even though Bhagwan is showering so much Grace, it is a great misfortune that people don't have love for Him and His name. My brother, you would surely have read the 'Ramcharitamanas' written by Goswami Tulsidasji. If you have not, I request you to do so. In the Bal Kaand (the first division), there is a detailed description of how Bhagwan's name is even greater than His form. If, even after reading it, you don't feel convinced about this, read it again and again. Then it will dawn on you that the name has given salvation to countless people; it always stays with us. Bhagwan, however, manifests

occasionally, and gives salvation to a selected few. The name uplifts all, and is always available. It has the capacity to make even Bhagwan unbend!

The *artha* (meaning of the word) of 'naama' is, that, which makes *namita* (soft; humble). *Namayati naamayati vaa bhagavantam iti naama* – that, which softens even Bhagwan and brings Him to our level, is His name. His name transforms Him from the *niraakaara* (formless Brahman) to the *saakaara* (Ishwara with form). It makes Him come quickly instead of delaying. That is the thing called 'naam'. It is the greatness of the great that He gives His object (name) so much shakti, such tremendous capacity, and so much authority. Tulsidasji comments upon Bhagwan's magnanimity.

*Nidari ganee aadara gareeba para karata kripaa adhikaayee.*

Had Bhagwan not instilled such shakti in His name, what method would we have, by which we could obtain Him?

Therefore, whether you chant Bhagwan's name with your tongue, or silently in your heart, or say 'Soham', it has the same effect. The names of all the objects of this gross interactive world of ours have filled our minds to such an extent that they cannot be erased without Bhagwan's help.

*Aapasamein samastattaa jinakee, likha saadhakataa baadhakataa tinakee.*

The fact is, this world of ours is created by names. You are a gentleman. Your masculine form is composed of the five elements. It is a dummy of the mind. One person says, 'This is my son,' and you are given the name 'son'. Another person says, 'This is my father', and you are called 'father'. A third person says, 'This is my brother',

and you get a third name. A fourth says, 'This is my husband', and so it goes on. One person gets called by so many names.

So then, how did the *prapancha* (interactive world) increase? It increased because people began to give names to their relationships and feelings. The *jeeva* (the Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) is trapped in the *prapancha* composed of names. Bhagwan's name has amazing power – it lifts a *jeeva* from the multiple names of the interactive world and establishes him into the name that belongs to Bhagwan.

If someone says, 'Bhagwan's naam should be taken only after the *mana* (emotional mind) becomes focused on Him,' please ask him, 'What is the method of purifying the *mana*, so it becomes focused on Bhagwan?'

Is the mind cleansed with a hammer or sickle? A person who wants to chant Bhagwan's name only after his mind is purified will, in all likelihood, never succeed in this lifetime!

When a person begins to chant Bhagwan's name, the impurities of his mind are removed gradually. His mind ultimately becomes pure. The taste of Bhagwan's name is so extraordinary, Sir, that it brings sweetness to the tongue, sweetness to the throat, and sweetness in the heart. It attracts all the *indreeya* (senses and organs of action) towards itself.

The Chandogya Upanishad describes a conversation between Naradji and the Sanat Kumars. Naradji spoke about all the Shastras (religious treatises) that he had studied, including the Rig Veda and also the ones that describe spirits in the Tantra.

'Naradji,' said the Sanat Kumars, 'Your mind is agitated by words. Why do you ensnare yourself in this maze of words? Take the

*aashraya* (refuge) of just one name. *Naama brahme`tyupaasate`* (*Chandogya Upanishad 7. 1. 5*). Do the *upaasanaa* (loving worship) that Bhagwan's name is the Brahman. Let go of the vast expanse of the Shastras.'

Look; if you have *shraddhaa* (deep faith), and utter one name repeatedly, do you know what the result will be? Taking the name will activate your tongue. Then, your *praana* (life spirit) will be controlled. Chanting His name repeatedly with *shraddha* will result in your mind becoming focused on Bhagwan. Your *mana* will gradually be cleansed of all impurities. It will become fit to absorb the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of the Paramatma. So, chant the name of Bhagwan with love, or even without love!

*Bhaava kubhaava anakha aalasahoon,*

*Naama japata mangala disi dasahoon.*

It is written in the Satvat Samhita that if the naam comes into our life, the *shakti* (power) of that word creates vibrations in every follicle and cell of our body, and all impurities are pushed out. We gradually become eligible for obtaining the Paramatma.

That, which enables us to meet the Paramatma – isn't that greater than the Paramatma?

Question: Maharajshri, how did Bhagwan protect Parikshit while he was still in his mother's womb? And, how did He give Gnan to Prahlad?

Answer: Well, my brother, on the one hand you believe Bhagwan to be Bhagwan (all-powerful), and on the other hand you ask how He protected Parikshit in the womb? This is an amazing contradiction!

Look; Bhagwan knows a mantra. When He utters that mantra, His *gadaa* (mace) begins to whirl round and round on all sides. Similarly, Bhagwan also has a *kaala-chakra* (the wheel of Time; a divine discus) that has the capacity to change the situation completely. He keeps these in His hands, and when He says, 'Remain still', all His weapons become passive. When He wants any situation to be changed, it changes. So, when we believe Bhagwan to be *sarvagnya* (all-knowing) and *sarva-shakti* (all-powerful), and also question where and how He can – or can't – give protection, it becomes a contradictory stand.

Now, think about Bhagwan's bhaktas (those who have loving devotion for Bhagwan). Kunti was Bhagwan's *sharanaagata* (one who has taken refuge in Bhagwan and is protected by Him). She saw Bhagwan even when trouble came into her life. Draupadi was such a sharanagat of Bhagwan that He transformed Himself from *che'tana* (sensate) to *jada* (an insensate object). He became a garment that was wrapped round her.

Subhadra was Bhagwan's sister. She was such a sharanagat that she uttered no word of complaint or question when her only son, Abhimanyu, was killed. 'Bhagwan is my brother. He is aware of

everything that is happening. Then, why should I grieve? Whatever He does will be good.'

Subhadra's daughter-in-law, Abhimanyu's widow Uttara, tells Bhagwan, 'Prabhu, it matters not if I die, but *maa me` garbho nipaatyataam* (*Bhagwat 1. 8. 10*) – let the baby in my womb not be destroyed. He is the only scion of the Kaurava-Pandava lineage, and the son of Your nephew. He must be protected. I am Your sharanagat. All the Pandavas have taken refuge in You. Please save this child!'

You tell me, now, doesn't Bhagwan have a heart? Is His heart made of stone? If His heart doesn't melt for a situation of such pathos, when will it melt? This is such a unique episode of the Shrimad Bhagwat that even the most hard-hearted person cannot fail to be moved!

It is written in the tenth canto of the Bhagwat that Bhagwan ran, with the Chakra, and in the first canto it is written that He ran with the Gada in His hand. Bhagwan used two of His divine weapons simultaneously, to protect that one baby!

Nowhere else, in any of the Puranas is such a scene described where Bhagwan uses two weapons at the same time for the same purpose. The Bhagwat says that Bhagwan was already in Uttara's womb (He is omnipresent), but when shranagati (total surrender) rose in Uttara's heart, He became Parikshit's brother.

The one who needs protection should be the one who prays for protection. He should pray even if there is no relationship; and if there is a relationship, Bhagwan protects the way a father protects his son, or a brother protects his brother. When Uttara prayed for

Bhagwan's help He manifested in her womb. He entered her womb and protected His brother Parikshit.

There are many Devi-Devtas in this world who don't give *darshana* (appear before their bhaktas), but the one who is in such haste to protect a baby still in the womb, is the one who is our *sharanya* (refuge).

Therefore, please never harbor doubts about Bhagwan's *anugraha* (compassion) and *kripaa* (Grace). It is effective at all times and in every situation.

Regarding giving Gnan to Prahlad while he was still in the womb – what is there to be surprised that a recipient of Naradji's kripa gets Gnan even before he is born? The relationship between the Sanat Kumars and Naradji is wonderful. They are also brothers. The Sanat Kumars are *nivritti-paraayana* (inclined to withdraw from worldly matters) and Naradji Maharaj is continuously involved in *pre`ma pravritti* (actions prompted by his love for Bhagwan). The Sanat Kumars are Gnan personified. They are always immersed in Gnan.

Some of the Puranas state that after giving a *shaapa* (curse) to Jay-Vijay, the Sanat Kumars wanted that Bhagwan should liberate them from the curse as quickly as possible. So they came as Prahlad, into the womb of Hiranyakashipu's wife. Some Puranas say that Indra captured Kayadhu (Prahlad's mother) with the intention of killing the baby as soon as it was born. Naradji rescued her by telling Indra, 'This unborn baby is to be a great bhakta of Bhagwan. You will never succeed in killing him.' Indra let Kayadhu go free. Naradji took her to his ashram (hermitage). He would talk to her about Bhagwan's bhakti and Tattvagnan (knowledge of the essence of the Brahman; enlightenment). Prahlad got the *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions) from this, and became a Gnani (enlightened person)

while he was still in his mother's womb. He obtained *rati* (love) for Bhagwan.

This story has a great utility for us. If a pregnant woman prays to Bhagwan, Bhagwan protects even the baby in her womb! He also bestows bhakti and Gnan on her.



Question: Maharajshri, Prahlad got Gnan while he was still in his mother's womb, because of Naradji's *kripaa* (Grace). He obtained *bhagvat-sharanaagati* (taking refuge in Bhagwan) and *bhaagvat-dharma* (the Dharma recommended by Bhagwan). Please enlighten us further on this subject.

Answer: Look, my brother, Bhagwan's sharanagati and Bhagwat-Dharma are the same thing. It is not that they come separately from somewhere.

We believe the Vedas to be *anaadi* (without a beginning in time; eternal) and *apaurushe`ya* (not spoken or written by any human being; eternal and divine). That means, Bhagwan is the one who has created the Vedas, and it is He who reveals them. This is why they are considered to be of such importance. Sharanagati and Bhagwat-Dharma are described in the Vedas. It is written in the Upanishad:

*Yo brahmaanam vidadhaati poorvam yo vai ve`daanshcha prahinoti tasmai,*

*tam ha de`vamaatmabuddhiprakaasham mumukshurvai sharanamaham prapadhe`.*

*(Shwetashwara Upanishad 6. 18)*

(He, who creates Brahma at the beginning of Creation, and reveals the Vedas for him – I am a mumukshu, seeking liberation from the cycle of rebirth, and I take refuge in Him, who illuminates my buddhi.)

The word '*sharana*' (refuge) is also used in the Jain philosophy – *aattasharano bhava* – as well as by the Buddhists. *Buddham*

*sharanam gacchaami, dhammam sharanam gacchaami, sangham sharanam gacchaami.*

In the Gita – which is a part of the Mahabharata – Shri Krishna has, Himself, spoken about the greatness of sharanagati and *samarpana* (offering up).

*Patram pushpam falam toyam yo me`bhaktyaa prayachhati,  
tadaham bhaktyupahritamashnaami prayataatmanah. (9. 26)*

(When any bhakta offers Me a leaf, flower, fruit, or even water with love, with a heart unsullied by worldly considerations, I manifest before him and accept his offering.)

Elsewhere in the Gita Bhagwan has given a teaching for humans, which comes under the *maanava-dharma* (the Dharma of a human being). He says:

*Maam hi paartha vyapaashritya ye`pi syuh paapayonayah,  
striyo vaishyaastathaa shoodraaste`pi yaanti paraam gatim. (9. 32)*

(O Arjuna! Whether it is a woman, a prostitute, a low-born person, or one of the down-fallen castes, they obtain salvation by taking refuge in Me.)

The special feature of this Bhagwat Dharma is that you don't need to sit in a *yagna-shaalaa* (the place where the ritual of a Yagna is done), and undertake such Vedic rituals. You can carry out this Dharma while attending to your shop, while in a market place, at a factory or office, as you do your work. Whatever you do, feel, think, or say, resolve to offer it up to Bhagwan. Carry on with your routine tasks and think about Bhagwan while doing your work. Or else, offer up your actions to Bhagwan after doing them; either will do. '*Samarpya kuryaat, kritvaa vaa samarpaye`t.*'

Where else will you find such a Dharma? Neither do you have to utter Vedic mantras for doing this Dharma, nor do you need to recite Sanskrit passages. Even folk songs about Bhagwan are enough!

*Geetaani naamaani tadarthakaani gaayanvilajjo vivhare`dasanga.*

*(Bhagwat 11. 2. 39)*

(Sing Bhagwan's name without shame or shyness, as you go about doing your work.)

That means, even the singing of songs that describe Bhagwan's frolics is Bhagwat-Dharma. It bestows great good fortune. Bhakti rises in the heart of a person who does this, and the person also gets *vairagya* (detachment from worldly considerations). He even obtains Tattvagnan (enlightenment; knowledge about the essence of the Brahman).

Bhagwat-Dharma is another form of sharanagati. All the glory in it is Bhagwan's. To be *aashrita* (dependent) on Bhagwan's greatness is sharanagati; it is the Bhagwat-Dharma.

Question: Maharajji, in his commentary on the Gita – called ‘Gita Rahasya’ – Lokmanya Tilak has accepted Karma (action; work) as an independent *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress), just like Bhakti and Gnan. What is your opinion?

Answer: Look; focus your mind on this point – what is the goal, when Lokmanya Tilak accepts Karma-yoga (the method of linking our actions to Bhagwan) as an independent *sadhana* (method)? He has accepted it as an independent method for obtaining the fruit of the karma.

The Gita says:

*Karmanaiva hi sansiddhimaasthita janakaadyajah,*

*lokasangrahame`vaapi sanpashyankartumarhasi.*

(3. 20)

(Gnanis like Janak obtained the supreme goal, enlightenment, by doing karmas that were unmotivated by worldly consideration. For this reason, and also to set a good example to society, Arjuna, it is proper for you to act.)

The *antahkarana* (subtle body; fourfold mind composed on the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = subtle pride of individuality) is purified through unselfish karmas. Doing karmas also gives rise to a desire to know the Satya (ultimate reality; the Brahman), and help to obtain Gnan.

As far as the purifying of the antahkarana, or getting bhakti, and obtaining Bhagwan are concerned, Karma-yoga is undoubtedly an independent method. However, when it comes to obtaining the experience of the oneness of the Atma and the Brahman, that is not a karma; it is a *bodha* (knowledge with conviction). That is why the Vedas say:

*Gnaatvaa maam shaantimrichhati (Gita 5. 29)*

(A person obtains inner peace when he obtains Gnan about Me.)

Therefore, Gnan is an independent method when it comes to obtaining the knowledge that our Atma is the Paramatma. This is the Gnan needed for *aavarana bhanga* (shattering the veil of nescience that hides this Satya).

Regarding creating a wish to get detached from worldly considerations, get bhakti for Bhagwan, or attain Vaikuntha (the divine realm of Bhagwan Vishnu), *karma-yoga* – meaning, doing work to please Bhagwan – is certainly a valid method in its own right.

In other words, for obtaining the *saguna* (with attributes) Ishwara, Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, and the Ashtanga Yoga (of Patanjali) are all independent methods. The Gnan that comes from comprehending and absorbing the Mahavakyas (ultimate statements of the Vedas) like ‘Tattvamasī’ (Tat = That, the Brahman, Tvam = you, the Atma, asi = is. You are the Atma and the Atma is That Brahman) is the only method.

Question: Maharajshri, I have an *agnaata* (unknown; hidden) question about the *agnaata sattaa* (unknown existence) that is present in all hearts, and every person wants to obtain knowledge about it. Please tell us who that agnaat sattaa is, and how we can obtain its *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience).

Answer: How would it be, if the answer to an agnaat question were to remain agnaat?! When the question itself is unknown, the answer should also be unknown!

However, since you want it to be *gnaata* (known), then, know this – *sadbhaavanaa* (pure existence; benevolence) is present in everybody, without being noticed.

Some people believe that the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality) is full of impurities. They are quite mistaken. Hidden away among the dirt are gems and people can see the brilliance of these gems. At times, that sattaa shines so brightly that people are amazed!

So, look within yourself, and observe the special qualities that are within you. You can gift *jeevana* (life) to all. The Vedas describe people who had such immense power and valor that one marvels to read of them.

There was a lady called Vishpala, whose leg was cut badly in a battle. She prayed with such intense faith that her wound was miraculously healed, and she was able to fight again the next day.

Similarly, there is a story about a lady called Shandili. The story is that her Ashram (hermitage) was at a place called Galata in Jaipur. Galab Rishi and Garudaji (the eagle on whom Bhagwan Vishnu rides) came to her Ashram. They felt like carrying her off to Vaikuntha (the divine realm of Bhagwan Vishnu), keeping her there, and getting her married there.

Shandili heard about their plans. The strength of her resolve was such that Garudaji's wings fell off, and Galab Rishi melted, and turned into a fresh water spring. This was the force of her *sankalpa* (resolve)!

Our ancient books contain many such examples. The fact is that there is a *shakti* (power; force) in every person's heart. It is a *sattaa* (active presence) that is directly connected with Bhagwan. There is always a direct connection of the *ansha* (part) with the *anshee* (whole), so never consider yourself to be poor or lacking. Use your life to help others, and use your anand (joy) to give anand to others. Develop and spread the inclination for unity and amity.

There is an *agnaata sattaa* (unknown presence), agnaat Gnan, and agnaat anand within you. They are *aparoksha* (known through direct personal experience), but you do not recognize them. Allow them to manifest. Our Bhagwan is not one who only remains hidden; He manifests in everyone, in every grain and speck, at every moment. See all with *sadbhaava* (goodwill).

There is no fundamental difference in the male and female forms. Both are created from the same matter. Both have the same kind of *nimitta* (cause), and Bhagwan abides in both. So, let your *svaroopa* (essence; true form) be revealed. Let your *saakshaata aparoksha bhaava* (the feeling that Bhagwan is present in your heart) expand.

Don't make yourself smaller; make yourself vast. The *saara* (quintessence) of having a human form is to have the ability to see the one essence of the Paramatma in all. This is something that benefits all.

If this is difficult for you, take Bhagwan's name to awaken this feeling. Do the *poojaa* (ritual worship) of a stone – of a Shaligram (a round stone worshiped as Vishnu Bhagwan) or a Shivaling (a phallic emblem of Shankar Bhagwan), or some carved image – and develop the feeling that Bhagwan is present in them.

I met a Punditji who was very old. He was a *vidvaana* (learned scholar) of *vyaakarana* (Sanskrit grammar), Vedanta, and the Nyaya school of thought. He told me, 'I made *savaa karoda* (ten million two hundred and fifty thousand) Shivalings of clay and did their puja for many years. I chanted "*Om namah shivaayah*". When I did not have any supernatural experience, I went and sat in a nearby temple. I wondered whether all our Shastras (religious books) are making false statements when they say that the *shabda* (word) and *artha* (its meaning) are one. Even literature reiterates this – '*Vaagarthaaviva sampriktau* (Raghuvansha 1.1)', '*Giraa aratha jala beechi sama*', etc.

The grammarians are also of the opinion that all *vritti* (mental inclinations; thoughts) are filled with *shabda* (word; a sound), because there is a *sfote* – an unheard sound – that that is created along with the creation of any word. The Mimansa philosophy agrees that words and their meaning are created simultaneously.

If this is true, why am I not getting the direct personal experience of the artha of Bhagwan's name, in spite of chanting Shankar Bhagwan's name for years, and doing His puja?



When this feeling arose in my mind, Shankar Bhagwan came from above, and stood before me. His complexion was fair. He was holding a trishul (trident) in His hand. A sickle shaped moon shone on His forehead, and Gangaji was in His matted locks. His sublime form is beyond description.

Shankar Bhagwan smiled gently as He raised His hand in blessing. “The Shastras are not false”, he said. “They are all true.” There is no shakti (power) apart from Bhagwan. Wherever you look with a *dridha bhaava* (feeling of firm conviction) you will get His *Darshan* (vision).’

This was some ten or twelve years ago. This is why Shri Neelkantha Acharyaji Maharaj says, in his commentary on the Gita’s twelfth chapter, ‘If you observe any name, form, appearance, or action in this *srishti* (Creation) minutely, the gross matter of this world will fade, and Bhagwan will appear.’

Therefore, my brother, it is of universal benefit that you harbor no ill-will for any, or do anything that causes trouble for anyone. Give up all tendencies of seeing faults in others, and fill your heart with benevolence, meaning, with the feeling of the Paramatma.

Your agnaat question should have received an agnaat answer, but since you placed the question in the presence of so many people, I gave a *gnaata* (known) reply. We have to reach the experience that nothing exists, apart from our Atma, apart from the Paramatma.

Question: Maharajji, of the four *purushaarthas* (major achievements) in this world, what is the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of Moksha? What is a simple method for obtaining it? I also have a desire to know what the swarup of the Atma becomes when a person attains Moksha.

Answer: Moksha is the fourth Purushartha. Only after successfully achieving the first three – Dharma (instituted religion), Artha (worldly success), Kama (fulfillment of worldly desires) – can Moksha be attained.

Artha means worldly riches; external objects. People want them, and they keep changing; which means, the word 'Artha' indicates two things. One is *arthyate*, meaning, that which we desire; and the other is *iyarti*, meaning, that which continues to move, does not stand still.

That, which we desire, is outside the body. Kama Purushartha is within the body; it is more subtle than Artha. We want that we should get the object of our desire, and not get what we don't like.

When Artha and Kama increase, life becomes disturbed and full of agitation. The Dharma Purushartha controls both the Artha Purushartha (the tendency to accumulate) as well as the Kama Purushartha (our endless desires). Kama (desire) is in the *mana* (emotional mind) and Dharma is in the *buddhi* (intellect). That, which purifies external objects is called *shrama* (work). For example, cotton is cleaned to make cloth, clay is purified to make cement, and iron is purified to make instruments. Those who make gross matter suitable

for our use are called *shramika* (laborers), and those who want to purify the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the mana, buddhi, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle ego of individuality) are called *dhaarmika* (those who adhere to Dharma).

When the desire for wealth becomes unrestrained, it is the feeling for Dharma that keeps it within the framework of what is ethical. When desire and lust threaten to overcome a person, it is the Dharma established in the buddhi that restrains a person from wrongdoing. Thus, as stated, Artha is external, Kama is in the mana, and Dharma is in the buddhi.

The Moksha Purushartha, however, is the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of the Atma. When *raaga-dve'sha* (attachments-aversions) for Artha and Kama are reduced, and interest towards the rituals of Dharma wanes, the person turns towards Moksha.

People do Dharma even to get their name in the newspapers, get social acclaim, or obtain some worldly objective. Dharma gets spread extensively. It is seen that people generally take advantage of Dharma and the *dhaarmika* (those who adhere to Dharma). It is not uncommon for people to make a false show of Dharma to get money. They make Dharma the *saadhana* (method; means) and Artha the *saadhya* (goal).

Similarly, Kama becomes the goal and Dharma becomes the means for some people. In this, the *anushtaana* (ritual) is not done in the proper manner. Dharma means *antahkarana shuddhi* – the purification of the fourfold mind. When we see that Artha entails *bandhana* (bondage; being tied to our worldly desires), and so do Kama and Dharma, we lift up both hands and begin to pray to be free of all bondage. Artha, Kama, and Dharma mean having a desire for

some other object; and desire for any worldly or otherworldly object binds a person to the object of his desire. The wish to be free of all bondage is called Moksha.

When a person who wants Moksha first gets the wish to be completely free, he thinks, 'What can I do to obtain Moksha? What are the pure items of food that I should restrict myself to, to help me obtain Moksha? And which Devta should I worship?' Such thoughts are indications of a mild, medium, or intense desire for liberation.

When *mumukshaa* (wish for Moksha) becomes intense, the person realizes that it is childish and illogical to think that Moksha can be obtained by doing something, indulging in something, by some incident, or Moksha can be given by someone.

This is why a seeker of Moksha should first understand the swarup of Moksha. Mumuksha needs to be awoken before Moksha can be attained. We want to be free of everything. Our life should be such that we are not tied to any object or situation. It should be independent of any person, at all times, in every place, and in every way. Whether we are in a Samadhi or worldly interaction, there should be no constraint of any kind in our life. This is supreme independence. Manuji has used the word *svaraaja* (self-rule) in the twelfth chapter of 'Manusmriti.'

*Sarvabhooteshu chaatmaanam sarvabhootaani chaatmani,*

*Sampashyannaatmayajee svaaraajyamadhi gacchati. (12. 91)*

A person who gives up his ego, and experiences himself in all, and all in himself, and experiences his Self as not being separate from the form of the Paramatma, obtains swaraj.

*Svaatantryam paramam padam.*

(Independence is the highest status.)

To obtain Moksha, a person also has to give up the feeling of *saadhya-saadhana* (the goal – the method for obtaining the goal). When people do a Yagna (ritual where oblations are poured into the sacred fire) to obtain Swarga (Heaven), the Yagna is the method and Swarga is the goal. Thus, all the *bhaava* (feeling) of sadhya-sadhan become a matter of indifference. The person realizes that the fruit of a limited sadhan will also be limited. A Moksha given by someone will be dependent on the giver, since the one who gives it can also take it back. That is why the *bodha* (personal knowledge) of our *nitya-mukta-svaroop*a (eternally free essence) is, in fact, the highest method for Moksha.

Some people think, 'I will obtain Moksha when I succeed in attaining a state of Samadhi.' Some people believe they will get Moksha when they go to Swarga. There are also people who believe they will get Moksha when if they do some specific action. They all desire a fruit that is limited.

What Moksha actually is, is the swarup of the Atma; and that is revealed when *avidyaa* (nescience; ignorance about the Atma) is removed. Moksha is our Atma, and our Atma is *sacchidaananda* (Sat = pure existence; Chit = pure consciousness, Ananda = pure joy; the Brahman).

Nobody can strive earnestly for Moksha unless they have *vairaagya* (detachment for worldly considerations), *tyaaga* (renunciation), and a strong mumuksha. When a person has mumuksha and he takes the *sharana* (refuge) of a Gnani Sadguru (an enlightened Mahatma who will be his spiritual guide) he first gets *vive`ka* (discrimination between the eternal and the transient). Then he gets vairagya and

the *shata-sampatti* (the six qualities of mental and physical restraints, lack of interest in worldly matters, serene endurance and tolerance, faith, and understanding). After that, by his Guru's Grace, he starts doing *shravana-manana-nididhyaasana* (listening to and assimilating spiritual discourses – giving deep thought to what you have heard – bringing the mind back repeatedly to the subject of the talks).

It happens, sometimes, that a person who has done *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress) in his previous life has a *shuddha* (pure) antahkarana. If that be the case he gets Tattvagnan (enlightenment; the knowledge that the Atma and the Brahman are one, and are the substratum of all that exists) by doing shravan just once, otherwise, if he has doubts he cannot obtain Gnan by doing shravan just once.

It is true that there can never be any doubt regarding the existence of the *pramaana* (proof), *prame`ya* (that, which is proved), and the *pramaataa* (one who proves). The doubt is whether what is being said is authentic and irrefutable or not, and whether the One referred to is real or not.

Thus, if a person has doubts, or a disinclination to believe, he cannot obtain Gnan easily through shravan. When that is the case, he has to do manan, using logic, and concentrate on rejecting the transient objects of this world that his mind keeps straying towards. He has to direct his thoughts towards the Brahman. Only then will they focus on the highest level of mental inclinations.

The *adhishtaana* (substratum of all that exists; the Brahman) and the *prakashaka* (the one who illuminates everything, including thoughts) are one and the same. The illuminator is the *drashtaa* (the one who sees but is not involved). The *che`tana* (pure consciousness)

is 'I', and the true 'I' is the Atma. Just as a dreamer is the substratum of everything in the dream world, when a person obtains the realization that the substratum of this entire interactive world we experience is one, he becomes free of all bondage.

A wealthy businessman – who is wealthy because of the good deeds done in a previous life – is seen in a dream. He has no reality and no previous birth. Neither has a dream person who is to go to Swarga after death. Everything seen in dreams, all the different kinds of people, Devtas, or others, are illuminated by the consciousness of the mind of the dreamer. Their substratum is also the same consciousness, and this consciousness is the *saakshaata* (incarnate) swarup of the Parabrahm Paramatma. This is the indication of the Vedas.

Therefore, once a person has the bodha of his *adviteeyataa* (non-dual essence) no kind of bondage remains for him. He has neither *raaga* (attachments) nor *dve'sha* (aversions), because everything is his own Atma. When a person reaches such a stage, equanimity and non-involvement come into his life automatically.

There is oneness in the form of the Atma, and all things become equal. This is a state of *poornataa* (wholeness; being complete). It is attained only when a person rises above Artha, Kama and Dharma. He also has to rise above the states of his antahkarana, and negate the divisions of *drishya-darshan* (that which is seen – the seeing). The person then gets the bodha of his own swarup.

After that, the enlightened person can interact in the world or go into a Samadhi; it makes no difference. His state is *poorna* (whole; complete). He is neither small nor great. There is no attachment in

his heart, no aversion, no connection with place or time, and no 'other'.

The removal of *agnana* (lack of Gnan) regarding the non-dual Atma is called 'Moksha'. Moksha is another name of the Atma. If the Atma were to expire when a person obtained Mukti (Moksha), nobody in this world would ever want Moksha! Nor would it be called a Purushartha!

Thus, the Atma is *mukta-svaroop*a (the essence that is always free), and the experience of its termination can never come within the scope of experience. Not expiring is also experienced.

One person said, 'I have seen the expiry of the Atma.' Another replied, 'if you have seen it, it is your experience.' If somebody experiences *shoonya* (nothing; a void) it will be *anubhava-svaroop*a (the form of an experience).

Therefore, the Atma is *saakshaat adviteeya*. It is the *Sacchidananda-gnana* (filled with Sat, Chit and Anand) *Brahm swarup*, and this *bodha* is actually the *swarup* of Mukti, because it is this *bodha* that removes *avidyaa* (nescience; ignorance), and the removal of *avidya* is the obtaining of Moksha!



Question: Maharajji, are *tapasyaa* and *titikshaa* the same thing? If not, what is the difference between them?

Answer: *Tapasyaa* (asceticism ; austerities) is done voluntarily. There are different *vrata* (specific forms of asceticism) like the *krichra* and *chaandraayana* vratas. These are tapasya. Some people undertake sitting under the full summer sun, with five or eighty four pots filled with burning coals on all sides. In such tapasya, the person voluntarily endures physical suffering.

*Titikshaa* is when sorrow or suffering – like the death of a loved one, the house being burnt down, incurring financial losses, or getting some disease – comes into your life, and you endure it patiently.

*Sahanam sarvadukhaanaam apratikaarapoorvakam,  
chintaavilaaparahitam sa titikshaa nigadyate`.*

There was a bhakta who was very ill. I went to visit him with some others. He lay in bed moaning, ‘Hai – hai!’

‘Bhaktaji,’ I said, ‘If a Vedanti had said “hai – hai “, I would have told him that it was his tongue that was complaining; it has nothing to do with his Self. Or, that it was his *mana* (emotional mind) that experienced the suffering, because he is the unattached, non-dual Atma, not connected to this “hai – hai”. Let those who moan and groan continue to do so. You are a bhakta. You should have an unbroken *bhagavadaakaara vritti* (a mental inclination only for Bhagwan). Why are you saying “hai – hai”? ‘

The bhakta was honest and straightforward. He thanked me for reminding him of what a bhakta's attitude should be. He resolved to endure his suffering without complaint.

What I mean to say is, if a person does not have the ability to endure suffering, he will never succeed in life. '*Peedodbhavaa siddhayah*' – suffering gives birth to success.

Long ago I had written a shloka:

*He` dantadhaavana sanvishya vivare` nishshankamageekuru  
peedaatairvihitaam manaag hatamanaa maa bhooh saha  
svaapadam,*

*loke` shodhana-bodhana-pranayinah ke` ke` na kaam kaam dashaam  
kashtaamaapuraho rahogatamidam peedodbhavaah siddhayah.*

'O datum (a twig of the neem tree, traditionally used for cleaning teeth) enter the mouth without hesitation. The teeth you wish to protect will crush you. Let yourself get crushed. Endure the pain without getting agitated.'

Anybody who wants to achieve something in life has to face difficulties. What don't they have to face? How many are the kinds of difficulties they have to overcome! Even in scientific research, people have to go through considerable hardship. That is why titiksha is of the utmost importance in our life.

If someone asks, 'What is the need for physical tapasya?' the answer is, 'physical tapasya is essential for removing the wrong habits that have come into our life.' The true *tapasvee* (those who do tapasya) practice the austerities as described in the Gita. Please note them.

*De`va-dvija-guru-praagna-poojanam shauchamaarjavam,*

*brahmacharyam-ahinsaa cha shaareeram tapa uchyate`.*

(17. 14)

The physical *tapa* (asceticism) of the highest level is to worship the Devtas (divine powers), Brahmins (who keep our ancient learning intact), Guru and learned people, to practice sensual restraint, and non-violence.

The tapa of speech is:

*Anudve`gakaram vaakyam satyam priyahitam cha yat,*

*svaadhyaayaabhyasanam chaiva vaangmayam tapa ucchyate`.*

(17. 15)

Speech that does not cause agitation, is truthful and pleasant to hear, beneficial, and to the point; and the habitual chanting of mantras from the Veda, and the names of Bhagwan, is the highest tapasya of speech.

Then there is the tapa of the *mana* (emotional mind).

*Manahprasaadah saumyatvam maunamaatmavinigraha,*

*bhaavasanshuddhiritye`tattapo maanasamuchyate`.*

(17. 16)

Retaining mental tranquility, meditating on Bhagwan daily, self-restraint, and universal benevolence are the superior tapa of the mind.

Thus, tapasya is something that enhances worldly, spiritual, and mental abilities, and enriches a human being. One kind of tapa is described in the Taittireeya Upanishad.

*Tapasyaa brahma vijignaasasva (3. 2. 5).*

Have an urge to know the Brahman through tapasya. Meditate on the Brahman as you do tapa.

Here, however, tapa does not refer to physical discomforts. Here, the word 'tapa' means turning the *buddhi* (intellect) towards the Parabrahm Paramatma; towards the Tattva.

*Aakriti* (form), *vikriti* (distortion; deterioration), *sanskriti* (cultural influences), and their *prakriti*, meaning (natural qualities or essential nature) – the form in Nature, the changes in the forms, and the forms of change; and the subtle influences in the forms – give up thinking about all these. Think only about the Tattva that illuminates them, by which they are established, and in which they are perceived.

Which is the tapa these can be investigated by? It is a tapa called *aalochanaatmaka* (consideration of, or an assessment of something) by *oohaapoha* (reasoning; deliberation); not by placing a query to the computer! No tutor can provide you with a solution! It is only when a person applies his mind to this subject that the chemical reaction takes place in the antahkarana (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and the *ahankaara* = subtle pride of individuality), and then the person acquires the capability to get *darshan* (glimpse) of the Satya (ultimate Truth, pure existence).

So, understand well, the difference between tapasya and titiksha. It is to your benefit to do so. Enduring hardship with equanimity is a habit that gives you *kalyaana* (great good fortune). When you endure hardship for the purpose of carrying out your allotted work, it

gives you a *sahishnuta* (ability to endure) that is very useful in the life of a human being.

Question: Maharajshri, why is *japa* (ritual chanting) a *Yagna* (Vedic ritual where oblations are poured into the sacred fire for a specific purpose)? What is the *vidhi* (method)? Does japa mean only *naama-japa* (chanting Bhagwan's name) or does it also mean doing the japa of a mantra (group of words that have power)?

Answer: Japa means to connect the *bhaava* (feeling of love and reverence) of our heart to one object, meaning, to the Paramatma. The Paramatma should be the object of our love.

Where the word 'japa' is first mentioned in the Yoga Darshan, it is written, '*Tajjapastadartha-bhaavanam*' (1. 28). The *pranava* (OUM) indicates the Ishwara. The japa of the pranava means building up a deep feeling for the object indicated by this word. Elsewhere in the Yoga Darshan the word *svaadhyaya* (study, also of the Self) is also used. *Svaadhyayaadishta-de`vataa-samprayoga* (2. 44). This means, there is japa even in svadhyaya.

Japa can be of Bhagwan's name and also of a mantra. However, it is best if the person doing japa takes *deekshaa* (formal initiation) from a Sadguru (enlightened Mahatma who is willing to be his spiritual guide), and then does japa as instructed by him.

Deeksha can also be given through the eyes. The Guru's look creates a bhavana in the heart of the *shishya* (disciple). There is also a *maanasee deekshaa* (initiation through thought transference) where the Guru can transmit a mental resolve to a shishya who is far away. Our Shastras (ancient books of religion) accept ten kinds of deeksha.

Regarding mantra japa, the power of a mantra is awoken when the Atma (of the individual), Guru, Ishtadev (chosen form of worship), and the words of the mantra – all four – merge, and become one. I have seen the shakti (power) of many mantras, and seen their amazing effects. I have also seen the effect a mantra has on the person who uses it successfully. I will utter the word for you. The effect of chanting *hreem* is different from the effect of chanting *kreema*.

Sometimes, people impulsively start chanting a mantra without knowing about it in depth. They are ignorant about the reaction it will have on their mind and body. Unfortunately the majority of today's Gurus are also lacking in a comprehensive knowledge about the mantras they recommend so freely. Half-baked Gurus and ignorant *che'laa* (disciples)! Neither is aware of the dangers involved if a mantra is chanted by someone who is not eligible.

A person needs to have the right qualifications for chanting the pranava, Gayatri Mantra, and some other mantras. The Gopaltapani Upanishad has an *ashtaakshara* (of eight letters) Gopal Mantra. The Rama Rahasya Upanishad has several Rama Mantras. The Vedic Samhitas (collection of shlokas) have several mantras related to Shiva Bhagwan. There are also mantras of Saraswati Devi. All these result in a *nishkaama* (free of worldly desires) mind, if chanted with a nishkama *bhaava* (feeling).

The fact is, the *shuddhi* (purification) of the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality) is achieved when the heart is not sullied by worldly considerations. Therefore, the more nishkama a person becomes, the better it is.

The Gurus explain the method of the japa they give to the disciple. They explain the correct way of uttering the mantra. They teach the disciple how to do the *sanskaara* (sanctifying rites) of the *maalaa* (a string of 108 beads, with an elongated bead to mark the starting point), do the *nyaasa* (purifying the different parts of the body before starting the japa), the meaning of the mantra, and how to meditate on the meaning.

Now, regarding the naam-japa – the difference between a naam and a mantra is that when a mantra japa is done, it is the shakti (power) of the *kartaa* (doer) that gives power to the mantra. The power of the mantra rises in proportion to the intensity of the person's feeling, the strength of his faith, and the level of his concentration.

In the naam-japa, the shakti of the karta is not considered to be of primary importance. The inner strength of the one who chants it is not what gives the mantra its shakti; it is the naam. It is the *anugraha* (Grace) of the one whose name is being chanted that gives the force to the mantra.

The shakti of the *tat padaartha* (the 'That' factor in the Vedic statement 'Tattvamasi', which means that *tat* = That, the Brahman, *tvam* = you, the Atma, *asi* = are; you, the Atma are the Brahman) gives shakti to the name. The mantra, on the other hand, gains shakti from the spiritual force of the ritual and the feeling of the person doing it.

However, what does it mean if you make no effort whatsoever, thinking that Bhagwan will give bhakti when He wants? It is like telling someone, 'Come to my house when you feel like coming.' It is quite different from giving a proper invitation, fixing the day and date.



When Bhagwan's Grace descends into His name it can bestow immediate *darshan* (a glimpse) of the *naamee* (the one whose name it is). Bhagwan has invested so much shakti into His name that it has the capacity to give a direct personal experience of the naami!

The naam is said to be the Brahman. Just as the Brahman pervades every place, naam-japa can be done anywhere. You may be in the dirtiest place possible, but you can take Bhagwan's name without hesitation, because the Brahman is there as well.

Similarly, no matter what time it may be – *uttaraayana* (the six months of the sun's northerly movement) or *dakshinaayana* (the six months of the sun's southerly movement), *vyatipaata* (the name of an auspicious position of the sun and moon), or *sarva-siddhi-yoga* (a combination of planets positioned to give success) – you can take Bhagwan's name. There are no restrictions of *de'sha-kaala* (place-time) for taking Bhagwan's name.

Nor is there any restriction of caste in taking Bhagwan's name. Any person can take it, regardless of which caste or community he belongs to. Furthermore, there is no rule that the name must be given by a Guru. No sanskaras are required, but if a person takes Bhagwan's name in a *pavitra* (pure, according to the Shastras) place, and in a pavitra time, after a pavitra person has done the sanskar of a pavitra name, the effect is quicker and more powerful.

The *mahimaa* (glory; greatness) of the naam is immense because it contains Bhagwan's shakti. A mantra, on the other hand, is chanted voluntarily and according to the prescribed method. Else, if the person does anything that is contradictory to the mantra, even a *jaagrita* (awoken) mantra can go to sleep.

In the naam-japa, however, the mantra's being awake is irrelevant; anybody can go on chanting it, any time, anywhere.

A *vidvaana* (learned person) who has knowledge about the Shastras, and has done some *anushtaana* (specific rituals using mantras) is capable of explaining the *rahasya* (quintessence; deeper meaning) of mantras. The Vishnu Purana says:

*Svaadhyaayaat yogamaaseeta yogaatsvaadhyaayamaavase`t,  
svaadhyaaya-yoga-sampattyaa paramaatmaa prakaashate`.*

You can do japa and *dhyana* (meditation), do dhyana and japa, and dhyana again. By doing this you will begin to experience the Paramatma's effulgence in your heart within a few days.

Therefore, it cannot be said that the name is greater than a mantra, or that the reverse is true. Bhagwan abides in both. The thing is, people don't feel satisfied unless they put in a strenuous effort according to the prescribed method. So, chant the name, or the mantra, as directed by your Guru, or else continue to chant the name anyway!

There is one more point to be kept in mind. Those who are eligible for doing the Gayatri Mantra japa, or some other mantra, are those who have received the *yagnopaveeta* (sacred thread). They will incur *paapa* (sin) if they don't do that japa. However, people incur no *paapa* if they don't take Bhagwan's name. They do, however, get *punya* (spiritual merit) if they do take Bhagwan's name.

Therefore, everybody should do the japa of the name or a mantra, as per their eligibility.

Question: Maharajji, on the one hand it is said that success is achieved through hard work – ‘*udyoginam purushasinghamupaiti lakshmeeh*’, and on the other hand it is said that success comes through *bhaagya* (fate, preordained by actions in the past life) – ‘*bhaagyam falati sarvatra*’. Which is correct?

Answer: You see, the fact is that working hard is in our hands, but bhagya is not. Therefore, you should apply yourself wholeheartedly to what is possible for you to do. Then, if you don’t get success you can blame your bhagya!

Bhagya, however, is created from actions. The fruits of things done in past lives are called ‘*bhaagya*’. So, put in your best effort in this life to create a new bhagya. If you don’t put in any effort in this life, and leave everything to bhagya, how will you have any bhagya in your next life? Therefore, the least you can do is to work well, and do good deeds, to create a good bhagya – both for this life and the next.

There is one more point, my brother. There are people who do not believe in a past birth. There are *majhaba* (religious schools of thought) that deny the possibility of any previous birth. There are majhabs that believe a person goes only once to Narak-Swarga (Hell-Heaven). From where do they bring bhagya into the scheme of things?

So, carry out your ordained duties with great enthusiasm. You face disappointment because your eye is on the fruit of your action. Another cause of your disappointment is that you don’t give importance to what you do. You offer a glass of water to someone

and expect some fruit for it. Oh, what fruit do you expect? Do you expect *laddoo* (sweetmeats)? No, Sir! You have done a good deed by giving a glass of water to a thirsty person. After you gave it, didn't you feel the gladness of having done something good? Didn't the good action give you a feeling of satisfaction? If not, what was the action for? What *se`vaa* (service) did you render?

My brother, *satkarma* (a good action) is, in itself, an excellent thing. Don't expect any fruit for it! Go on doing things that soothe and comfort. If some well-meaning action fails to please, put the blame on your *praarabdha* (destiny created by actions of the past lives), and go on working with the best intentions.

When something happens that causes sorrow – like losing a precious object, the death of a loved one, or a youngster running away from home – you can say, 'This was *prarabdha*. It was destined to happen.' *Bhagya* is something to console yourself with; it is not to be used as an excuse for avoiding work. In this, don't look at the fruit; go on doing what you should do.

*Siddhi* (success) abides in the *utsaaha* (enthusiasm, zeal) – '*kriyaa siddhih sattve` vasati mahataam nopakarane`.*' Continue to work with enthusiasm. Tomorrow, if not today; the day after tomorrow, if not tomorrow – you will get success.

There is a story. A Mahatma came to the house of a man the day his son was born. He said, 'My son, the *bhagya* of this baby is that he will have five rupees and one donkey. He won't have anything more.'

The same Mahatma came to the house again, twenty years later. The baby was now a young man. 'Mahatmaji,' he said, 'my parents are no more. I am left with nothing except one donkey and five rupees.'

‘All right,’ said the Mahatma. ‘Do as I say. Go and sell the donkey today. Add your five rupees to the sum you get, and use it to help poor people.’

The young man obeyed the Mahatma. The next day, he was given a donkey and five rupees, since that was written in his destiny. The Mahatma told him to repeat the previous day’s actions. Once more, the young man got a donkey and five rupees the following day. This continued for five or six months.

The prarabdha of the young man came weeping to the Mahatma. ‘Maharaj, how can I provide the boy with a donkey and five rupees every day of his life?’

‘Make a total of all he is to receive in this lifetime, and give it to him in one lump sum,’ said the Mahatma.

The meaning of this story is that you should never lose hope. Never get dejected. You should continue to work to the best of your ability. If the idea of bhagya is firmly established in your mind, make the effort to read the second part of the ‘Yoga Vasishtha’. The principle of bhagya is ridiculed so thoroughly that it seems there is no such thing as bhagya! It is only a fragment of human imagination.

Question: It is said, '*shaanti-khadanga kare` yasya durjanah kim karishyati`*' – what harm can a wicked person do to someone who hold the sword of *shaanti* (peace) in his heart? But then, why was Mahatma Gandhi killed with a gun? Why was Christ crucified? Why was Socrates made to drink poison?

Answer: O Bhagwan! If I give a proper answer to this question I will have to explain how society benefited by the shooting of Mahatma Gandhi, the crucifying of Christ, and the poisoning of Socrates.

Jesus and Socrates did not live during our lifetime, but Mahatma Gandhi was shot in the recent past. Only Bhagwan knows what was in the mind of the man who shot Gandhiji, but what you should focus on is the way the whole country became united when he was killed, and the way the Nation became stable. It is true that we lost our Mahatma – we were parted from him – this was a great sorrow then, and is still a sorrow for us. But, when we see the awareness created by his killing, how people's *shraddhaa* (respect mixed with faith) for him and his ideals increased, it was no insignificant benefit. In my opinion, our country and society benefited even more by the manner of his death than by his life.

The fact is, the lives and deaths of Mahatmas are both for the good of the people. Every grain of a Mahatma is of great importance to this world. Socrates drank poison to protect his principle, and Jesus Christ accepted to be crucified for the same reason. Had Socrates died a natural death, would people have respected him as much as they do because he chose to die rather than give up his principles?

Do you think Christianity would have spread all over the world the way it has done had Christ not been crucified?

Thus, when such events take place it does not harm shanti in any way. On the contrary, people get *buddhi* (a depth of understanding; wisdom). The meaning of shanti is to have equanimity for life and death. If you wish to stay alive, and also want to have shanti, that shanti is false. On the one hand you are troubled at the thought of death, and on the other hand you wish to be at peace, untroubled by anything. That is contradictory. Shanti is when life and death are seen as equal.

The lives of Socrates, Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Dayananda, Swami Sharadananda and other great souls had an amazing strength of principle for which they were prepared to sacrifice their lives. This is why the person who said that no wicked person can harm anyone who has the sword of shanti in his hand has verily spoken the truth!

Question: Maharajji, the *vidvaana* (people learned in the Shastras) say that *pre`ma* (pure love) is the Ishwara, and the Ishwara is prema. Do you think this is correct?

Answer: Look, as far as my life is concerned, prema is, indeed, the Ishwara; and when it comes to the search for the *satya siddhaanta* (the principle of the Satya that can never be negated), *anubhava* (personal experience), the Ishwara is indeed prema. The fact is, both go together. Prema is the Ishwara and the Ishwara is prema.

It is the same as saying that Sat-Chit are Anand, and Anand is Sat-Chit. (Sat = pure existence, Chit = pure consciousness, Anand = pure joy; the Brahman and the substratum of all that exists). When the Sat is reflected predominantly in the *hridaya* (heart) the person goes into a Samadhi (a state of deep meditation). When the Chit is reflected predominantly in the *hridaya*, the person's *agnaana* (nescience; ignorance about the Brahman) is destroyed. And, when the Anand is reflected predominantly, the heart is filled with prema.

Therefore, if you want to rise higher, you first have to do *chintana* (give deep thought) on the Paramatma's *aananda-svaroop*a (essence of Anand). You must cultivate love for the Paramatma. This results in *vairaagya* (detachment) for the world arising in your heart.

When you want to do *vive`ka* (discriminate between the eternal and the transient) you should do vivek of the predominance of Chit in the Paramatma. You will feel aloof from the world. When you want to remain peaceful in a Samadhi you should meditate on the



Paramatma's Sat-swarup (His essence that is pure existence). You will go into a Samadhi.

Prema is the reflection of the Anand-swarup (the essence that is pure joy) seen in the heart. All the love in our heart is the Paramatma's shadow, but we attach it to petty worldly objects. This prevents its *shuddha-svaroopa* (pure essence; true form) from manifesting.

*Raso vai sah. Rasam hye`vaayam labdhvaa aanandee bhavati (Taittireeya Upanishad 2. 7). Aanando brahma iti vyajaanaat (Taittireeya Aranyaka 3. 6). Aanandam brahmano vidvaan na bibhe`ti kutashchana (Taittireeya Upanishad 2. 4). Yo vai bhoomaa tatsukham (Chandogya Upanishad 7. 23. 1).*

The Paramatma is *sukha-svaroopa* (the essence of complete happiness). His reflection shimmers in our heart, but our *vaasanaa* (avid worldly desires) mingle with it. It is like having a desire to eat jaggery. You get a lump of jaggery and eat it. You feel satisfied, and do not crave jaggery any more. In the same way, when the heart is free of worldly desires, the reflection of the Atmadeva (the Atma that is the Brahman) is seen in it. The person experiences *aananda-rasa* (the sweetness of happiness) and sukha. Sukha does not come from outside. If we do not see the Parameshwara who is always present in our heart, we will never be able to see Him in the heart of any other, no matter how hard we try.

Question: Maharajshri, there was a practice in Rajasthan some centuries ago, called '*jauhara*'. Women chose to die in a *chitaa* (funeral pyre) to escape being violated by aggressors who invaded the land. These ladies were called 'sati' (an exemplary wife who immolated herself by sitting with her husband's body on the pyre and being burnt to death). Even now, these legendary ladies are called 'sati'. Sati is one of the names of the goddess Parwati in the 'Devi Bhagwat'. Is the greatness of the women who died in jauhar equal to the greatness of the Devi Sati? Please enlighten us about this.

Answer: There is no question of *bhrama* (false understanding) here. You must have heard the story of Bhagwan Shankar's wife, Sati. She was the daughter of Daksha Prajapati. When she saw that her father had insulted Shankar Bhagwan in his Yagna (a Vedic ritual where oblations are poured into the sacred fire) she set herself ablaze by her Yogic powers. Therefore, it is totally appropriate that Sati is one of the names of the Devi.

Regarding the women who died in jauhar, it cannot be ascertained whether they chose to die for the sake of protecting their chastity, or whether they took this action with the idea that they would be united with their husbands in the realms after death. These days, it is seen that women set themselves on fire because they can no longer endure the torture inflicted on them by their families.

Instead of agitating your mind with these questions you should focus on your Dharma, your *niyama* (self imposed disciplines) and your *nishthaa* (faith). If you have to die for them, you should be prepared

to do so. A person who is ready to accept death in order to protect his Dharma, *niyam*, *pavitrataa* (purity according to the Shastras), and the *shuddhi* (purification) of his *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = subtle ego of individuality) gets *mangala* (good fortune). ‘*Svadharme`nnidhanam shre`ya (Gita 3. 35)*’ – it gives great good fortune if a person chooses to die for his Dharma.

Look, the people who have died for their country are called ‘*shaheeda*’ (martyrs; patriotic heroes). There is a village close to our village, called ‘Shaheed’, because so many men from that village have given their lives for their country.

Thus, when the people who give up their lives for their country, community, religion etc are honored, a lady who sacrifices her life to protect her honor should certainly be honored. I do not say that everybody should die for their principles, but people should certainly be willing to endure hardships for the sake of protecting their Sat (that which they believe to be righteous).

So, the name ‘Sati’ is absolutely appropriate. It is a name of Shakti (the goddess Durga who symbolizes power and strength) as well as a *pativrataa* (dedicated wife), and also a woman who adheres faithfully to her *niyama-nishthaa* (self-imposed disciplines - faith). A lady who protects her Sat is a sati.

Question: Maharajshri, please explain the '*braahmi-sthiti*' described in the Gita (2. 72). Please also tell us whether a *sthitapragna* (a person who retains equipoise under all circumstances) and a *jeevana-mukta* (one who is liberated in this very life) are the same.

Answer: The 'brahmi sthiti' you want to know about is given in the last shloka of the Gita's second chapter. I will recite the shloka for you first.

*E`shaa brahmee sthitih paartha nainaam praapya vimuhyati,  
sthitvaasyaamantakaale`pi brahmanirvaanamricchati.*

(O Arjuna, the state of a person who has obtained the Brahman is such that he never gets deluded. He remains established in the Brahman even at the time of leaving his gross physical body, and merges into the pure bliss of the Brahman.)

*Buddhau sharanamanviccha kripanaa falahe`tavah (Gita 2. 49).*

You should take the *sharana* (refuge) of the Paramatma who is within you, seated in your *buddhi* (unbiased intellect). The people who wander round filled with avid desires are like beggars.

The second point is that if you once obtain Yoga-buddhi (the intellect that attaches your every thought and action to the Paramatma) you are no longer subject to *paapa-punya* (sin-spiritual merit).

The third point is that the difference between *vikshe`pa-samaadhee* (agitation-deep meditation) is removed.

Now we come to the sthitapragna and the brahmi sthiti.

*Prajahaati yadaa kaamaansarvaanpaartha manogataan (Gita 2. 55).*

Don't work with *kaamanaa* (worldly desires) in your heart. However, there has to be some *prayojana* (purpose) for the work you do. There is a difference between prayojan and kamana. When we work with the wish that Bhagwan will be pleased with our work, that is prayojan, not kamana. When we do something for the purpose of realizing the Satya (the ultimate Truth), it is a prayojan. And, when we aspire to awaken an intense desire for *jignaasaa* (wish to know) for the Satya, it is prayojan, not kamana.

Let me repeat this for you. Work for doing your duty, purify your *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = unbiased intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle ego of individuality), pleasing Bhagwan, and awakening the desire to know the Satya – these five are not worldly desires; they are beneficial purposes. If you work motivated by any of these, it is called *nishkaama karma* (actions that are not motivated by worldly considerations).

Real *nishkaamataa* (being free of worldly desires) cannot come as long as you have the *bhrama* (false understanding) that you are the *bhoktaa* (the one who experiences pleasure and pain). As long as you have the subtle ego of being the one who feels happy or sad, there will be a desire for the things you like and an aversion for the things you dislike. Furthermore, the bhram of being the bhokta will remain as long as there is the bhram of being the *kartaa* (doer). This is why the false impression, 'I am the one who suffers or enjoys; I am the doer of my actions', must be broken.

*Ya e`nam ve`tti hantaaram yashchainam manyate` hatam,*

*ubhau tau na vijaaneetee naayam hanta na hanyate` (2. 19).*

A person who believes himself to be the *hanta* (killer) and *hata* (killed) is an *agnanee* (one who lacks Gnan), and so is a person who believes himself to be the *bhokta* (the one who experiences pleasure and pain) or the *bhogy* (that, which is experienced by another).

This is where the main characteristics of a sthitapragna begin. The actions of a sthitapragna are not motivated by desire, since he has given up all desire.

*Ve`daavinaashinam nityam ya e`namajavyayam (2. 21)*

(A person who knows that the Atma is eternal, unborn, and undying.)

Another condition is:

*Dukhe`shvanudvignamanaa sukhe`shu vigatasprihah (2. 56).*

A sthitapragna has no urge for the present sukha (happiness) to continue, because he knows that sukha comes and goes, just as dukha (sorrow) also comes and goes. You should not get frightened when dukha comes, nor should you try to hold on to the sukha that comes. Else, when sukha leaves, it will drag you in the most painful manner. It will make you weep when it leaves.

There is a Mahatma. He is a good person. He teaches people how to meditate in a way that they get the feeling of flying in the sky. Shrimati Ratnakumari Shastri went to meet him. She is the daughter of Seth Govind Dasji, and a Member of Parliament. ‘Maharaj,’ she asked him, ‘what happens after we have flown high? If we have to descend to earth again, what is the benefit of flying high?’

So, don’t allow dukha to agitate you. It will bring sukha when it leaves.

*Neechairgacchatyupari cha dashaa chakrane`mikrame`na.*

The poet Kalidas says that sukha-dukha come and go the way the wheels of a chariot rotate turn by turn.

Therefore, the first point is that if you want your *pragnaa* (purified intellect) to be *pratishthita* (established); if you wish to become a sthitapragna and want your buddhi to be firm and stable, respected by all; if you want people to have faith and confidence in you and speak well of you, don't do anything that is motivated by kamana. Furthermore, don't depend on any other for your sukha – '*aatmanyeva cha santushtah* (3. 17)' – be content with what you are and what you have.

The second point is, don't get influenced by dukha and sukha.

The third point is, the *shubha* (auspicious) and the *ashubha* (inauspicious), good and bad, keep coming into everybody's life. So, '*Naabhinandati na dve`shti* (2. 57)' – don't get carried away in welcoming the shubha or hating the dukha that comes into your life. If you get caught up in these, you will swing between happiness and sorrow ten times a day, since these keep coming all the time. The buddhi becomes steadfast when a person saves himself from being effected by joys and sorrows.

The fourth point is that you should examine your heart and see how much *nivritti* (withdrawal from worldly matters) is in you.

We went to a Mahatma for his *darshana* (seeing someone we revere). It was in the afternoon, under the full heat of the summer sun. I had stopped using shoes, and walked barefoot on the burning sand. It was two o'clock in the afternoon when we reached his hut.

The Mahatma opened his door and said, ‘Come inside.’ Then he smiled and said, ‘If it is uncomfortably hot outside, you should retire within. If facing the external world gives dukha, you should definitely have the habit of turning inwards. Bhagwan has explained this by giving the example of a *korma* (tortoise).’

*Yadaa sanharate` chaayam koormongaaneeva sarvashah (2. 58).*

(Be like a tortoise that withdraws its limbs when it senses danger.)

That means, if the outside world is burning, you should quickly retreat into your inner world.

Then the Mahatma told us, ‘Look, my brothers, external *tapasyaa* (asceticism; austerities) are not enough. Nivritti is possible only for a little while.

*Vishayaa vinivartante` niraahaarasya de`hinah (2. 59).*

(The senses can be kept away from the sense objects, but the attachment to the sense objects is not destroyed.)

Therefore, when a person begins to see his true Self as the non-dual Brahman – who is the illuminator and substratum of all that exists – he no longer feels any attachment or aversion.

*Rasavarjam rasopyasya param drishtvaa nivartate` (2. 59).*

All the attachments of a sthitapragna are removed when he gets the direct personal experience of the Parameshwara.

After explaining this, Bhagwan enumerates the obstacles on this path.

*Dhyaayato vishayaan punsah sangaste`shoopajaayate`,  
sangaatsanjaayate` kaamah kaamaatkrodhobhijaayate`.*



*Krodhaatbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah,  
smritibhranshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaatpranashyati.*

(2. 62, 63)

(A person whose mind is focused on sense objects gets attached to them. Attachment gives rise to desire, and anger takes over when desire is thwarted. Anger dulls the intellect. An angry person forgets what the right thing to do is. That means, his intellect and Gnan are destroyed. When the intellect is destroyed, a person's downfall is certain.)

These eight are the obstacles for anyone who aspires to cultivate a steadfast intellect, and wants to be considered dependable and trustworthy. A person who does not have the confidence of people, that he is true to his resolve and has right thinking, will never achieve Artha-Dharma-Kama-Moksha (wealth, fulfilling his ordained duties, fulfillment of desires, and liberation from rebirth) in any matter.

Bhagwan said, 'Don't let your desires agitate your mind. Interact with others without having attachments and aversions. Then the world will seem completely the opposite of what it seems now.'

What does it mean, that the world will seem to be the opposite of what it seems now?

It means that the things that give sukha to a worldly person will seem a source of dukha to you, and you will see sukha in the things worldly people fear.

*Yaa nishaa sarvabhootaanaam tasyaam jaagarti sanyamee.*

(2. 69).

(That, which is night to worldly people is as day for a sthitapragna Yogi.)

A sthitapragna sits serenely in his own state. If a person once attains the state of a sthitapragna he never gets deluded by anything. If a person can't attain that state all his life, he may attain it just before the moment of his death. This means, even one moment at the time of death is of great importance. And, it is wonderful if a person acquires this state while he lives.

*Sthitvaasyaamantakaale`pi brahmanirvaanamricchati*

(2. 72).

(If a Yogi attains this state even in the last minutes of his life, he becomes established in the pure bliss of the Brahman.)

Here, the word 'api' means that a person gets the direct personal experience of the supreme bliss, where there is no *aavarana* (covering that hides the ultimate Truth), and no *agnan*. He experiences the Paramatma.

A person who practices being in this Brahmi-sthiti (the state of being established in the Brahman) while interacting in this world becomes a sthitapragna. He obtains this elevated mental state. And, those who do bhakti (have loving devotion for Bhagwan) also become free of attachments and aversions. They have benevolence for all, and compassion for those who suffer.

*Adve`shtaa sarvabhootaanaam maitrah karuna e`va cha.*

(12. 13).

(They have no ill-will for any; only friendship and compassion for all.)

Here, too, the same point is made – only a person who brings *sad-guna* (good qualities) into his life, and whose nature is naturally filled with good tendencies, will be a bhakta. This is stated clearly in the Gita's fourteenth chapter, where the characteristics of a *gunateeta* (one who has risen above the three gunas – tendencies – that rule humans) are explained. '*Gunaateetaḥ sa ucchyate*' (14. 25). (A person who attains equanimity under all circumstances is called a 'gunateeta'.)

A person's life becomes *shuddha* (pure, according to the Shastras) when he turns towards Bhagwan. As long as he is turned away from the Bhagwan within, it seems as though there is no one to look after him. He wanders in the darkness of ignorance, doing whatever he feels like. Such a person will neither be a sthitapragna, nor a bhakta, nor a gunateeta.

Question: Maharajji, in one place in the Mahabharata, Bhimasena says that Artha (wealth; material success) is greater than Dharma (instituted religion). Please explain this statement.

Answer: You see, when the Mahabharata war was over, it was seen that neither side achieved anything. Yudhishtira felt *nirve`da* (disenchanted with life). 'I will not rule the Kingdom,' he said. 'I will go into the forest and do *tapasyaa* (asceticism; austerities).'

Many people tried to make him change his mind, including Bhimasena, Arjuna, Sahdev, Nakul and even Draupadi. Shri Krishna also tried to dispel Yudhishtira's *moha* (deluded thinking about his duty). Ultimately, it was Mahatma Bhishma who succeeded.

The Mahabharata is such a *grantha* (literary work; treatise) that those who have not read it will not know the a-b-c of our ancient cultural and traditional values. It is the only comprehensive work where each and every type of human character is portrayed through its different characters. And every kind of mental disposition is exposed.

Bhimasena's words are applicable not only to those times, but are equally applicable in present times. Don't the wives and children tell the man of the house that they need money to live? Therefore, Artha is of great importance in its own right.

But what if someone wants to obtain Bhagwan? What if he wants to obtain Moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth)? Artha makes it possible to do Dharma (rituals and deeds recommended by instituted religion), but it also increases pride, anger, and *avidyaa* (nescience;

faulty thinking). These days even education has to be paid for. You can buy a doctorate, a Ph.D., or a D. Lt. degree if you pay enough. This is the power of money.

The meaning of Artha here, is, how can you do *daana* (give in charity) if you don't have money? How will you provide a living to the *vidvaana* (learned Brahmins who safeguard our scriptures), *brahmachaaree* (avowed celibates), *tyaagee* (those who renounce the world), *virakta* (Monks who have no worldly possessions)?

Dharma can be done only if you have the means to do rituals like the Yagna-Yaaga (offering oblations into the sacred fire). Artha helps us to live in comfort and also follow the recommendations of instituted religion. The Artha that is not used for Dharma will surely give dukha tomorrow, if not today. Artha means *dhana* (wealth) – *arthate* - that, which keeps going from one place to another, which never stays in the hands of any one person, is called 'Artha'.

It is with this Artha that a human does Dharma, becomes a learned scholar, a *sanyamee* (one who leads a life of restraint), and becomes *vishvasneeya* (trustworthy). If a wealthy person leads a life without the restraint of decorum and ethics, people will not be inclined to place their trust in him. Even if they trust him, his wealth will not increase. It is essential for a wealthy person to win the confidence of society.

I know a trader who made promises but did not keep them. Several people came to me and complained. They told me they would do no business with him in future, since he did not keep his word. So, a wealthy person should also be trusted, as be respected for his wisdom and prudence. Furthermore, he should have the ability to show anger when required.

In the episode mentioned here, Bhimasena is counseling his elder brother Yudhishtira, to not allow dejection to overcome him and make him run away from his duty. From the worldly viewpoint everything can be attained through wealth. This was true in the Dwarpar Yuga (the age in which the Mahabharata was took place) and it is true today. Satya (the Truth that can never be negated) is not dependent on Time. It remains the Truth whether it is spoken earlier or later. The purpose of this statement at that time was to show the utility of wealth for making the basic emotions pure.

There are thousands of shlokas in the Mahabharata that speak of the importance of the Artha Purushartha (Purushartha means basic human achievement. There are four Purusharthas – Artha, Dharma, Kama = fulfillment of desires, and Moksha = liberation from the cycle of rebirth.) There are thousands of shlokas that speak of the importance of the Kama Purushartha. Dialogues between men and women are given that are quite unique.

Similarly, the shlokas on Dharma and Moksha are also given in profusion. There is a whole section called the ‘Moksha Parva’. However, after reading the entire Mahabharata, the conclusion reached is that neither the Kauravas nor the Pandavas gained anything from the war. The epic establishes the evils of hatred, strife, and antagonism. It shows how gambling leads to the damage that can occur when a man flirts with a woman who is not his wife, the devastation caused by war, and the misfortune caused by disdaining the Paramatma.

The fact is, this great work is meant to give a teaching to all mankind. Other important works are written specifically for different groups of people. Some are for Rama-bhaktas, some are for Krishna-bhaktas, some for Shiva-bhaktas, and so on. The Mahabharata, however, is for

all. Its message is not only about our ancient traditional values; it is meant for all people, everywhere, at all times. It discusses matters from the viewpoints of Artha, Dharma, Kama and Moksha, *tyaaga* (renouncing), bhakti (having loving devotion for Bhagwan), and every other aspect of the human mind.

Thus, as stated earlier, this praise of Artha is not limited to the Dwarpar Yuga. Millions of people in the present times will agree that money is, indeed, something very important. This opinion has always been prevalent. Even the *manovritti* (mental inclinations) have their Yuga (period in Time). What is the *mana* (emotional mind) of people these days? People have no hesitation in cheating others, or even killing people. When people see blatant wrongdoing they say, 'It is the effect of the Yuga of Kali.'

Similarly, the places people like to spend their time in – sitting among women, among lowly officers or learned scholars, wanting a high position or a humble status – happens according to the Yuga-Dharma (the nature of that eon).

This is the Yuga of Karma (working; actions) and *sangraha* (accumulation of wealth). It is also the Yuga for an inclination for leading a restrained life. No, no! We don't want all this – this is the Yuga for Moksha! Thus, the Yugas keep changing the pattern of actions and attitudes. The Yuga of Kali is merely an indication.

There is a mantra in the Vedas:

*Kalih shayaano bhavati sanjihaanastu dvaaparah,  
uttishthanstre`taa bhavati kritam sampadyate` charan.*

*(Aitareeya Brahmana 7. 15)*

The meaning of this mantra is, a person is in the Kali Yuga when he slumbers towards the Satya. He is in the Dwarpar Yuga when he stirs in his sleep. He comes into the Treta Yuga when he stands up, and when he begins to walk towards the Paramatma – towards the Satya – he comes into the Satya Yuga even if he is born in the Kali Yuga.

All these can be seen in all the Yugas, by the actions and inclinations of a person. A human being can live in the highest Yuga if he chooses to live a noble, ethical life filled with Gnan and bhakti.



Question: Maharajshri, in the forty sixth shloka of the Gita's sixth chapter, Shri Krishna has stated that a Yogi (one who has yoked himself to Bhagwan) is superior to a *tapasvee* (one who undertakes severe austerities), *gnaanee* (one who has great learning), and *karmee* (one who works hard to attain his goal). Thus, He has given a Yogi the highest status. Is the Yogi truly the most superior, or have I not understood this correctly?

Answer: If you read the shloka that comes immediately after the shloka to which you refer, you will see that Bhagwan has brought the Yogi down, from the seventh Heaven, back to earth. I will recite the shloka for you.

*Yoginaamapi sarve`sham madgate`naantaraatmanaa,*

*shraddhaavaanbhajate`yo maam sa me`yuktatamo matah (6. 47)*

(Even among the Yogis, the Yogi whose heart is constantly attached to Me with faith and reverence is, in My opinion, the most superior of all.)

Certainly, the shloka before this says that a Yogi is the greatest among all; but what is the purpose for saying this? This is said in order to establish a bhakta (one who is completely devoted to Bhagwan) as being the highest of all. Bhagwan says that the Yogi who has such bhakti that he is constantly immersed in love for Bhagwan, and is aware that Bhagwan abides in all hearts, is the greatest.

One is a *yukta* (attached to Bhagwan), another is a *yuktatara* (more strongly attached to Bhagwan), and the third is a *yuktatama*

(completely attached to Bhagwan) Yogi. This means, if all the Yogis of the world were to be gathered, and the three highest selected, the lowest is the yukta, the middle one is the yuktatara, and the highest is the yuktatam Yogi. Bhagwan says, 'A yuktatam Yogi is one who does My bhajan (meditate lovingly on Me) with *shraddhaa* (faith and reverence).' This is a style of speaking where Bhagwan wants to extol the highest Yogi, and speaks of the superiority of a Yogi to highlight the fact that a bhakta's is the highest category of all.

For example, a man praises his daughter for being highly intelligent. He also praises his son for being very competent, and also praises his younger brother's competence. This shows his love for all three. The result is that they all feel encouraged to work zealously.

Shri Krishna is the most beloved! He abides in everybody's heart. Why won't He praise the person whose heart is filled with love for Him? It is like Pundit Devdhar Sharma going to Assam and praising the hospitality of his host. Then he goes to Madras and praises the host who looked after him so warmly. 'No one has looked after me so well!' he says.

In the same way, my brother, Vrindavan is par excellence, Ayodhya is better than any other place, and Kashi (Varanasi) is the most superior of all cities. The feeling of appreciation is present in all hearts, towards all that is good, and this is as it should be. The great poet Shri Harsh has written in his book, 'Naishadh',

*Vaagjanmavaifalyamasahyashalyam      gunaadbhute`      vastuni  
maunitaa che`t.*

'If we see something that is exceptionally good, and remain silent, our God-given tongue is wasted. It serves only to criticize or abuse.'

That is why Bhagwan Shri Krishna praises everything with *aatmabhaava* (feeling they are His own Atma). For Him, a Yogi is His own Atma, a bhakta is His own Atma, and a Karma Yogi (one whose every action is dedicated to Bhagwan) is also His own Atma.

The Gnani (enlightened Mahatma) is declared clearly to be Bhagwan's Atma.

*Udaaraah sarva e`vaite` gnaanee tvaatmaiva me` matam (7. 18)*

(All these are magnanimous, but the Gnani is My very essence.)

What happens is that the bhaktas tend to pay less attention to Bhagwan's words, and the Vedantis tend to pay less attention to His *roopa* (form). What is the result of this?

The Vedantis' neglect of Bhagwan's form results in their having no *saadhana* (method; means) for fulfilling the desires in their heart. And, the bhaktas' neglect of Bhagwan's words results in a reduction of their interest in Gnan and *paramaatha* (highest spiritual knowledge).

Therefore, we should obey Bhagwan's commands and also look at the beauty of His forms. The repeated use of '*tattvatah*' (essentially; basically) is given to emphasize on how rare Tattvagnan (knowledge about the essence of the Brahman) is.

*Manushyaanaam sahasre`shu kashchidyatati siddhaye`,*

*yataamapi siddhaanaam kashchinmaam ve`tti tattvatah.*

(7. 3)

(One person in thousands tries to obtain Me, and even among the Yogis who try, there is hardly one who knows My essence.)

People know Bhagwan by the forms and actions in His Avatars, but how many know His essence? That *tattva* (essence; the supreme spirit) – from which all forms emerge, and millions of universes emerge, along with the Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh of each universe – how many are there, who realize this?

How many people actually know what the *jagat* (this world we live in) is? What is the *jeeva* (the Atma attached to a body; an individual soul)? What is the Ishwara? That, which is one in many, like the gold in different ornaments, like the clay in the different pots, and the iron in different weapons – what is that Tattva?

What is the Tattva that is present the Avatars of Matsya (fish), Kacchap (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Nrisimha (Half man-half lion), Vaman (a small child), Parashuram, Shri Rama, Shri Krishna, Buddha, and Kalki? Is it *aastika* (those who believe that Bhagwan exists), *naastika* (those who believe there is no Bhagwan), *saakaara* (with form), *niraakaara* (formless), *vyaapya* (permeable), or *vyaapaka* (all-pervasive)?

To understand this, you will have to undertake an investigation of the Tattva. That is why Bhagwan uses the word ‘Tattva’ repeatedly.

*Bhaktyaa maamabhijaanaati yaavayashchaasmi tattvatah,*

*tato maam tattvato gnaatvaa vishate` tadanantaram.*

(18. 55)

(It is only through the *paraa bhakti* – single-minded devotion – that I, the Paramatma, can be known; My extent and My Tattva be known. When a person knows Me, My Tattva, because of his bhakti, he instantly merges into Me.)

Thus, that Tattva is the fount from which all *aakaara* (forms), *vikaara* (deterioration), *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions), *prakaara* (types), emerge. This Tattva is seen in all forms, without changing or any alteration, because it is the *abhinna-nimitta-upaadaana kaarana* (the cause that is also the instrument and the substance of which everything is made).

However, there are very few people who want to know Bhagwan in this form. The day you begin to make an effort to know that Tattva – the day you have a *jignaasaa* (wish to know) that Tattva – you will, yourself, rise above this maze of the interactive world.

Question: Maharajji, in all our different schools, the Ishwara is accepted as all-powerful, all-pervading, the illuminator of all, and the *svaroop*a (essence, true form) of Gnan.

In that case, why is *agnana* (ignorance about the Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists) and *andhakaara* (the darkness of ignorance) there at all? Is there some *shakti* (power) that is an obstacle to this Gnan and *prakaasha* (illumination)?

Answer: Do you have a personal perception of agnan and andhakar, or not? If you experience ignorance and darkness, light a lamp to remove the darkness, and obtain Gnan to remove agnan. The *sarvagna* (all-knowing), *sarva-shaktimaana* (all-powerful) you refer to is merely something you have heard. When you get a direct personal experience of the Ishwara, neither will agnan remain, nor will andhakar remain.

However, since you experience agnan and andhakar yourself – ‘*aham aatmaanam brahma na jaanaami* – I do not know my Atma to be the Brahman.’

It is your own experience that establishes agnan, is it not? That being the case, you should make an effort to obtain the Gnan described by the Mahatmas and the Shastras (ancient books on religion) for removing your agnan.

To save you from idleness and *jadataa* (becoming like insensate matter), to pull you out of darkness, and draw you to Himself, it is a great Grace of Bhagwan that He has spread agnan and andhakar in this world, because when these give *dukha* (sorrow) to people, and

people find them lacking in consciousness, and not the Satya (the truth that can never be negated), they will want to go and sit in His lap.

I am reminded of an incident of my childhood. I would insist on sleeping in the open fields. I loved to sleep outdoors. The field was some half a furlong from our house. My uncle tried to keep dissuading me, but I insisted.

One night, my uncle covered himself with a black blanket, and came loping towards me on all fours. I saw his figure in the moonlight, and felt terribly frightened. I decided I'd never sleep in the open fields again, in case I was attacked by a wild bear.

Thus, my brother, Bhagwan sometimes takes on the form of darkness, sometimes of the *viraata* (this vast world), and sometimes the form of *mrityu* (death). Sometimes He shows such a fearsome form of His that great warriors like Bhishma, Drona, and Jayadratha are seen getting crushed in His jaws. Bhagwan shows all these forms in order to make us detach ourselves from the world. We develop *vishvaasa* (staunch faith) in Him, and seek the Satya when we feel fear and distress.

What would you be, had there been no darkness of ignorance, and you had no wish to search for the Satya? Think for yourself! Had Satya not been hidden and you had nothing to investigate, or have *bhakti* (loving devotion for Bhagwan) for, what would your life be like? Oh, your life would be one of total subjugation to insensate objects, and full of suffering. You would have been gripped by death if you did not aspire to seek something beyond the mundane.

Thus, we need to have something that we can seek. We specially need something by which we can find ourselves. Have you ever

played hide and seek when you were a child? Do you remember how children hide, and look for each other?

Once, all the *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) were hidden in the dense darkness of *pralaya* (Dissolution). Bhagwan had to look for them. He quickly found them, and brought them out of the darkness. Then it was decided that Bhagwan would hide and the jeevas began to look for Him.

However, when it was the turn of the jeevas to look for Bhagwan, some people found delicious fruits and sweets. They got like-minded companions. Then they got trapped in their companions and indulgences.

Some jeevas got wealth and got involved in accumulating more and more. Some became engrossed in doing good works. There were some jeevas who were very clever. They began to say, 'We have seen You! We have spotted Your hiding place!' without actually seeing Him. Bhagwan thought, 'Truly, I am here. That is a fact. These people have indeed spotted Me.' These are the Vedantis, my brother! Without actually seeing Bhagwan, they claim that they have located Him.

The fact is that the Vedantis use Tattvagnan (Gnan about the Tattva – the non-dual essence that is the substratum of all that exists, and is everybody's Atma), to dispel *avidyaa* (nescience; ignorance about the Brahman). The author of 'Vartika' has stated that *darshana* (seeing) is *sopaadhika* (of an object that has a form and attributes).

Among the seekers there were some who were not at all clever. They began to cry out, 'Bhagwan! Please come out! We accept defeat!' Then they began to weep, and they wept so much that they become unconscious. Bhagwan's compassion arose, and He came out of



hiding. He revealed Himself to them. He lifted them up and held them close to His heart.

Therefore, if there were no frolic of hide and seek, how could Bhagwan's *leelaa* (divine play) be revealed? '*Lokavattu leelaa kaivalyam*' – this is from the Brahma Sootra (2. 1.33). Just as people like solitude at times, and being with people at times, Bhagwan feels the same.

That is why Veda Vyasa says:

*Kvachidajayaatmanaa cha charatonuchare`nnigamah.*

*(Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana 10. 87.14).*

At times Bhagwan stays alone with the *upaadhi* (superimposition connected to something) of Kaivalya (a state of meditation where no other exists), and sometimes He stays among people and does leela. Learn to recognize the One who is in both. You will see that it is your own Atma and no 'other'.

Question: Maharajshri, whenever I go to any Satsang (spiritual discourse), or sit in *bhajana* (singing of devotional songs; meditate lovingly on Bhagwan), my *mana* (emotional mind) starts to wander, and I feel drowsy even though I want to focus my mind on Bhagwan. How can I cure myself of this tendency?

Answer: The way to be free of drowsiness is to do something that interests you. You stay awake at night counting money. Count it one by one, and go on counting up to lakhs. You will not feel sleepy!

Another method is to sit chatting with a lady or gentleman friend you are friendly with. You will have no problem keeping awake!

What I mean to say is that people feel sleepy when they are bored. You can stay awake effortlessly in the company of a loved one. You will meet him and want to know more about him. *Pre`ma* (love) does not allow slumber to come. When someone meets his beloved, or waits for the arrival of a loved one, he does not feel sleepy. Sleep also stays away from a person who is afraid.

In the 'Prajagar Parva' of the Mahabharata, there is a description of Dhritarashtra calling Vidura, because he was too restless to sleep. 'What are the causes for sleep not coming?' he asks. Vidura describes the different causes.

Here, lack of interest in, and love for Satsang is the reason of your drowsiness. Had you been eager to hear about spiritual matters and Bhagwan's *leelaa* (divine play) you would not face this problem.

If you feel sleepy while doing bhajan, get up and wash your face and hands. Rinse your mouth. Splash water on your eyes. If you are doing japa (ritual chanting), look at every bead of your *maalaa* (a string of 108 beads with one long bead as the marker) as you utter Bhagwan's name. Say, 'Rama one, Rama two, Rama three' and so on. This will help your mind to remain alert.

The books of Tantra (mystical forms of worship) have mantras (groups of words that evoke power) to ensure that sleep does not come. There are also medicines that help a person stay awake. However, you should consult an Ayur Veda specialist before using any of them. The mantras can be used according to the directions given. It is written that if a person chants the mantra before doing bhajan he will not feel sleepy.

If I find myself unable to sleep, I feel I've been given a good opportunity to do Bhagwan's bhajan. Doing bhajan has a soothing effect, and I gradually fall asleep.

There was a gentleman in South India. He was a senior Congress leader. His name was Shrinivasji Shastri. Once he fell ill and was hospitalized. He suffered from not being able to fall asleep. The doctors told him to stop reading newspapers at night and listen to the Ramayana at bed time.

The newspapers were full of political news that agitated his mind. His pulse rate increased when he read them. However, when he listened to the Ramayana being read out, he became drowsy in a little while, and dropped off to sleep. The reason was that he had no interest in the Ramayana.

So, increase your inclination for bhajan. Weep, if you fall asleep. If you weep for Bhagwan, you won't feel sleepy. If even then you start

to feel drowsy, visualize Shri Krishna standing before you showing you His thumb to tease you!

Another simple method is to take a few sips of water and pop a piece of sugar candy into your mouth!

There was a Mahatma, Narain Swami, who stayed at Swargashram in Rishikesh. The Gita Press had published a book, 'The Experiences of a Sant' (Sant means Mahatma) written by him. Narain Swami had had Bhagwan's darshan (vision) when he was at Chanod. He used to keep awake at night, doing bhajan. He tied his *choti* (tuft of hair) with a string, and tied the string to the ceiling. His head would drop when he fell asleep and the string would jerk his choti and he would wake up.

You can rub your eyes to keep awake. You can give yourself a stinging slap. Sleep will fear such punishments and run away! If you feel drowsy during Satsang, weep with repentance when you reach home after the Satsang. 'This is terrible! How did my mana become such that I get sleepy when I listen to something that is so difficult for people to get?' If you feel genuine regret your sleep will gradually stop coming when your mind is focused on Bhagwan.

There was a bhakta called Gadadhar Bhatt. His compositions are sung at Vrindavan even today. When he gave discourses, the beauty of words and love for Bhagwan were such that people were overcome with *rasa* (sweet emotion). Their bodies tingled with the ecstasy of love for Bhagwan, and tears of love poured from their eyes.

There was one man who had no such emotional reactions. He would feel ashamed of his lack of bhakti. One day, he brought some chill powder knotted in a corner of his handkerchief. When people began

to cry, he touched the chilli powder to his eyes to make them water, so people would think that he, too, was crying.

After a couple of days, someone noticed his trick and told Gadadharji about his hypocrisy. 'Oh, well done!' said Bhattaji. 'The eyes that do not melt with ecstasy when the person hears Bhagwan's *kathaa* (discourse) deserve to be punished!' Then he went to the man and congratulated him!

Therefore, if you have love for Bhagwan's *kathaa* (discourses), His bhajan, and Satsang – and you want to drive away the sleep that threatens to – you can even harass your eyes, ears, and tongue in order to remain awake and alert. It is good to be awake.

There is one more method of driving away sleep. Go to bed as soon as you get up from bhajan. When you go to sleep you will repent, and your repentance will drive away your sleepiness. The, get up and do bhajan again!

Question: Maharajshri, I believe that you have definitely experienced *aatma-saakshaatkaara* (the direct personal experience of the Atma that is not separate from the Brahman, and is the substratum of all that exists). Please fulfill my desire and tell me about your experience.

Answer: Well, this question is just like asking a man about how he got married, and how he lives with his wife and children! Such questions do not merit an answer, because they are personal matters, not to be spoken of in public. Similarly, it is a *rahasya* (mystical secret) of my life as to when Bhagwan met me, or how He met me. It is not something to speak of publicly.

So, let go of this matter. You see, Atma-sakshatkar is available to all, but people are so engrossed in the sakshatkar (direct personal experience) of others that they do not think about Atma-sakshatkar at all! They want the sakshatkar of *dukha* (sorrow), and it is available to them!

When a man is engrossed in thinking about other people, how will he experience his Self? There are millions of objects in this world, telling people, 'Look at me! See how attractive I am!' The markets are full of attractive showrooms that clamor, 'We have this, and this, and this!' If a person is busy looking at inanimate objects, how will he get the experience of his own Atma?

Therefore, if you want to obtain Atma-sakshatkar, do not give any thought to whether anyone else has had a direct personal experience of his Atma or not. Focus on how you can obtain Atma-sakshatkar.

My brothers and I are ready to help you in this, but the Atma-sakshatkar has to be done by you.

Look; suppose I say that I have not had Atma-sakshatkar, what effect will it have on you? You will say, 'Oh, if even Swamiji has not obtained Atma-sakshatkar, what hope is there that I can obtain it?' And, if I say I have obtained Atma-sakshatkar, you will say, 'Oh! How boastful he is, to say in public that he has obtained Atma-sakshatkar!' You should not try to tie up a person from both sides in this manner. When you experience Atma-sakshatkar for yourself, you will also know about me.

Question: Maharajji, in our country, on the one hand people have Satsang (spiritual discourses), *sankeertana* (group singing of devotional songs), and rituals like Yagnas and Yaaga (offering oblations into the sacred fire). On the other hand, the current dirty *raajaneeti* (politics; manner of Governing the country) is devouring the human qualities. What should we do under the circumstances?

Answer: Look, my brother, politics – or the policies of the rulers – is a very good thing. It is helpful in keeping people, their activities and mentalities controlled. It is not only the *neeti* (moral conduct; ethics) of the Raja (ruler); it is the Raja of neetis!

However, the kind of people who get empowered to run and direct the policies influences the direction, thinking, inclinations, and activities of the people. That is why politics should stay in the hands of upright people whose minds and intentions are purely for the good of the people.

Just as Mahatma Gandhi gave rajneeti a direction, if other leaders guide the Nation well, it brings good fortune to all. However, if one country uses rajneeti to create enmity and ill-will with another, then rajneeti becomes corrupt.

If the good of the country is used as an excuse to suppress and exploit the States, it is a corruption of rajneeti. The intention of Governance should be the good of all the States in the country. National unity, communal and religious amity, and progress and prosperity should be the goal of all the different political parties. They should not allow their own narrow interests to harm the whole.



Coterie within parties should be avoided. If that is achieved, rajneeti is necessary today, and will always be necessary.

The fact is rajneeti is not to be blamed. It is the mental tendency of the people that is becoming increasingly selfish. That is the problem. To curtail this selfish tendency and prevent it from falling into an even deeper pit, it is vital to strengthen the awareness that the Ishwara is one in all beings; humanity is one in all the people of different castes and races. All the people of different States are Indians. These are the unifying factors that must be highlighted to create a spiritual atmosphere. Satsangs should be organized in every State in the country. Public discussions should be held to promote a feeling of universal good-will. That will convince people that small-minded attitudes – whether in the interests of individuals, a party, or a State – are eventually detrimental for all concerned. Only the viewpoint of the good of all is beneficial in the long run. We should pray that Bhagwan blesses us with leaders of the highest caliber.

I have seen Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Shraddhanandji, Lala Lajpatrai, Subhash Chandra Bose, and Jawaharlal Nehru. If our present leaders become as impressive and strong, if they tread the right path and lead others on the right path, the situation can be improved. Politics can be improved, and the country can be benefited. The leaders must have *aatma-buddhi* (identification) for the whole country, and serve the country with integrity. That will bring good fortune to them as well as to the Nation.

Question: Maharajshri, whose *sharana* (refuge; protection) should a human being take? Bhagwan's *maayaa* (power of illusion) is so powerful that it compelled even Sati to tell a lie to Shankar Bhagwan. In Tulsidasji's words, we can't get even Satsang (listen to a spiritual discourse) without Bhagwan's *kripaa* (Grace). Under the circumstances, how independent is a human being to do anything?

Answer: The *vidvaana* (scholars) of Ramayana – specially the Valmiki Ramayana – are of the opinion that you should always take the sharan of someone who is your superior. Taking the sharan of an inferior leads to downfall.

Manthara was of a lowly caste, her thinking was lowly, and she was filled with envy, hatred, and partiality. Kaikeyi could have taken the advice of Guru Vasishtha, Raja Dashrath, or Shri Rama, but she took Manthara's guidance! The result was that neither was Bharat crowned, nor did Kaikeyi remain a *sadhavaa* (a woman whose husband is alive). She became a *vidhavaa* (widow).

Similarly, Shri Rama took the sharan of the Samudra (sea). That also proved to be futile. It ended in another purpose being served. The effect of associating with – or taking the sharan of – an inferior, is that a person's intellect becomes sullied.

Sati did not have faith in her husband Shankar Bhagwan, her true well-wisher, who bestows benefits on all. She did a *paapa* (sin) by not telling him the truth, and so she had to give up her *bhaavaatmaka shareera* (form made of emotions). The forms of Devi-Devtas (divine powers; presiding deities) are always subtle forms, forms made of emotions.

Now, regarding the point of a human being's freedom of action – how can you expect the Ishwara to make us *paraadheena* (ruled by another; enslaved) to do *karma* (act; work), and also make us paradheen in *bhoga* (experience the fruits of our actions)? The Ishwara has given the *jeeva* (an individual soul; the Atma attached to a body) the freedom to act.

'I have given you *buddhi* (intelligence). Use it as a *taraajoo* (balance; weighing scale) to judge, and then use your *shareera* (body) to act. If you have no *ahankaara* (the subtle pride of being the doer of the action) it is not necessary for you to experience the fruits of your actions. But if you have ahankara, and you do not respect the inherent feeling of right and wrong, the universal benevolence latent in you; and you don't do *sat-karma* (good deeds) you will have to endure the fruits that are the result of your wrong actions.'

The fact is, Bhagwan's rule is such that it gives us the freedom to choose our actions, but we are bound to experience the fruits. If someone does something bad, he will have to suffer, because all are bound by the law of karma. They are free only in choosing how they wish to act.

We leave children free to play, but if a child is unfair to another child when they play – if he cheats while playing – he has to face the penalty. If he does something good, he is rewarded for it.

In the same way, human beings are the Ishwara's children. Bhagwan's arrangement is not such that a human being is sent to Narak (Hell) or Swarga (Heaven) forever. Satkarmas result in good fortune, and wrongdoing results in suffering, in proportion to the deed.

Therefore, you should keep these points in mind and then do whatever you think is best. People should keep in mind that wrong actions will give dukha, and be motivated into doing what is good and right. They should avoid doing anything that is wrong.

Question: Maharajshri, how should a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) understand the *sootra* (aphorisms) like '*Sarvam khalvidam brahm*' (*Chandogya Upanishad* 3. 14. 1)? Please tell us this in some detail.

Answer: You see, the purpose of all these sutras is to make us *svaadheena* (self-reliant; independent) and fearless. They also help us to become free of *raaga-dve'sha* (attachments-aversions), and get *aatma-saakshaatkaara* (a direct personal experience of the Atma that is not separate from the Brahman, and is the substratum of all that exists).

Goswami Tulsidasji has said, '*Paraadheena sapane`hun sukha naahin*' (a person who is ruled by another cannot even dream of being happy). Manuji has said, '*Sarvam parvasham dukham, sarvamaatmavasham sukham* (4. 160),' meaning, *dukha* (sorrow) is experienced by those who are dependent on any other, and *sukha* (happiness) is experienced by those who depend only on their own Atma (Self).

The *paraadheenataa* (being dependant on another) is that a person's eyes see a beautiful garment, and his *mana* (emotional mind) desires it. Then, his *buddhi* (intellect) starts thinking about how that garment can be procured. Thus, the mana becomes enslaved by the *indreeya* (senses) and the buddhi becomes enslaved by the mana. This dependency creates a lot of suffering for a sadhak.

The Gita says:

*Indriyaanaam hi charataam yanmanonu vidheeyate`  
tadasya harati pragnaam vaayurnaavamivaambhasi.*

(2. 67)

The *indreeya* (senses) get attached to some object, and the *mana* resolves to obtain it. Then the *buddhi* shows the method – just or unjust – by which it can be obtained. The *buddhi* becomes corrupt. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the *buddhi* controlled.

*Raagadve`shaviyuktaistu vishayaanindriyaishcharan,  
aatmavashyairvidhe`yaatmaa prasaadamadhigacchati.  
Prasaade`sarvadukhaanaam haanirasyopajaayate`,  
prasannache`taso hyaashu buddhih paryavatishtate`.*

(Gita 2. 64, 65)

Your *mana* should always remain *nirmala* (limpid) and *prasanna* (serene). It should never be sullied by allowing it to be subjugated by the senses or worldly considerations.

The Seers who have founded our Darshan Shastras (the branches of Vedic philosophy) have defined *sukha* (happiness)

*Anye`cchaanadheena-ichchaa-vishayatvam sukhatvam.*

(To be free of all desires is to be happy.)

You want to meet your friend. Why? Because you want to get money from him. Why? Because your wife wants to make some jewelry. Why? So that she feels happy. Why? If she is happy, I also feel happy. Why? My brother, there is no answer to this question!

*Ananda* (happiness) is our *sahaja svarooopa* (natural essence); it is our *svabhaava* (essential nature). When we do some other work for someone else – like meeting a friend to get money to make jewelry

to please the wife – that is not real sukha. Sukha is that, which depends on no other, only on our Self. Sukha is the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of this Atma (our Self).

The Chandogya Upanishad says:

*Yo vai bhoomaa tatsukham naalpe` sukhamasti.*

(7. 31. 1)

That, which is all-pervading, and is present in all, is called 'sukha'.

*Yadalpam tanmartyam (Chandogya Upanishad 7. 24. 1).*

Wherever *sankeernataa* (narrow-mindedness; mean-mindedness) is present, and there is an absence of *udaarataa* (magnanimity; large-heartedness), there is dukha.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says:

*Brahma tam paraadadyonyatraatmano ve`da,*

*kshatram tam paraadadyonyatraatmanah kshatram ve`da.*

(2. 4. 6)

If a person considers a Brahmin (a person of the priestly class, a custodian of our ancient knowledge) as separate from himself, he will get a *shaap* (curse) from the Brahmin. And, if a person considers a Kshtriya (a person of the warrior class; protector of the people) to be separate from himself, he will be disdained by a Kshatriya.

*Sarvam tam paraadaadyonyatraatmanah sarvam ve`da.*

(2. 4. 6)

If you think, 'This man is from another country,' you will feel apprehensive that he may attack you. If you think, 'He belongs to

another community; he may corrupt my community,' or, 'he belongs to another religious sect; he may convert the people of my faith and reduce our numbers,' there will be a fear of being harmed. If you consider even a Devta (presiding deity; divine power) to be separate, or the Vedas to be 'other', it will be harmful for you.

Therefore, the intellect that separates you and segregates, places a dukha before you, and you will always face the risk of attack from what you perceive as the 'other'. This is why the Taittireeya Upanishad says:

*Aanando brahme`ti vyajaanaat (3. 6. 1).*

The fact is that the vision of oneness is anand.

*Aanandam brahmano vidvaan na bibhe`ti kutashana (2. 9. 1)*

One who has known the *paripoorna* (complete within itself) *adviteeya* (non-dual) anand, has nothing to fear.

*Abhayam vai janakah praapyosi (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.2. 4)*

*Abhayam pratishthaam vindate` (Taittireeya Upanishad 2. 7. 1).*

A person who merges his Self into *poornataa* (the wholeness of the Brahman; unifies with all existence) always remains fearless. This is the real message of the sutras like *Sarvam khalvidam brahm*.

Dependency is connected to external objects, and also to our senses and avid urges. When Rama-bhaktas and Krishna-bhaktas quarrel with each other, it is like two blind men fighting in the dark, because they don't recognize each other.

Therefore, any kind of animosity is strife. It is an obstacle in our experiencing the sweetness of the Brahman that is not separate from our Atma, and is the substratum of all that exists.



*Raso vai sah, rasam tathe`vaayam labdhvaa aanandee bhavati.*

*(Taittireeya Upanishad 2. 7. 1)*

A person who has savored this Brahm-rasa (the sweet essence of the Brahman) that is infinite, non-dual, and in which everything is saturated, in which there is no separation of 'I-another', never feels fear anywhere.

Question: Maharajshri, what is the antahkarana? What is its *svaroopa* (essence; true form)? And, why is it given so much importance in the field of *aadhyaatma* (spiritual matters)?

Answer: This is the kind of question that is placed before a student sitting for an examination in some university of Vedanta! In fact, you are all my University, and if you want to test me, it gives me only pleasure because many learned scholars are sitting here, who are in the Managing Committees of Universities!

No object called the 'antahkarana' that has length, breadth, weight and age, has ever been seen. If our scientists find any substance called the antahkarana, they will catch it with their instruments, test it with chemicals, make a powder of it, and sell it in the market! They will advertise that anyone who wants to improve his antahkarana, and make it stronger, should have this medicine!

However, as stated, no substance or object called the antahkarana has been found by science. The people who do research give a name like 'psychology' to things they assume.

Then, what is the antahkarana?

It is our Gnan. What happens when it encounters any specific form? Forms are small, or imagined, or changeable, or created by our own subconscious impressions, whereas our Atma is Gnan-*svaroopa* (the essence of Gnan).

When the antahkarana encounters any form it identifies with that form. The person thinks, 'This is a very good thing. I should obtain it.'

Thus, the person makes resolves about different forms, and that is called the *mana* (emotional mind).

Now, the decision regarding the suitability of accepting the different resolves (or rejecting them) made by the *mana* is taken by the *buddhi* (intellect). It is the *buddhi* that decides whether an object is suitable to be accepted or not.

In other words, there are two forms of Gnan in the *buddhi* – *sankalpa* (resolve) and *vikalpa* (the alternative) – to accept or reject.

When we act according to the decision taken by the *buddhi*, there is one form of Gnan that is called *ahamkriti* (done by me). The form of *ahamkriti* is, 'I am obtaining this; I am doing this, I am giving this up, I am obtaining this knowledge,' etc. Gnan is one. It makes different resolves to get, do, or leave something. It has wishes. When a person does an *anushtana* (specific religious ritual for a specific purpose) successfully, it is called *ahankaara* (pride).

Now, the internal reactions caused by the *mana*, *buddhi* and *ahankara* are the changing forms of Gnan that are brought to a standstill at one place. That place is called the *chitta*. *Chitta* means a state of *sanchaya* (accumulation; storage). It is present in the deep sleep state and also the next day. It is preserved even during *Samadhi* (a state of deep meditation), and after the person emerges from the *Samadhi*.

*Tasya prashaantavaahitaa sanskaaraat (Yoga Sootra 3. 10).*

Even in *Samadhi*, the *sanskaras* remain in a dormant state, and when a person emerges from a *Samadhi* he is aware of the same mother, sister, house, and his own physical form, and everything he knew before.

Thus, mana, buddhi, ahankara and chitta are the four states of the antahkarana (fourfold mind; subtle body), as described by the Shastras (ancient books on religion). Actually, they are the names of the forms created by the combining of *gnaana* (knowledge) and the *gne`ya* (that, which is known).

A person has to bear the weight of the antahkarana as long as he lacks the knowledge of its *svaroopa* (essence; true form), or his own swarup, because he identifies with it. He believes it to be his Self, and believes it to be subject to death.

But when a person gets the *bodha* (cognition) of his own swarup, the mana, buddhi, chitta, and ahankara no longer seem to be his 'I' or 'mine'. They no longer seem real to him. He doesn't need to come or go anywhere. He no longer carries the burden of the antahkarana. He becomes fully liberated, and perceives himself to be *poorna* (complete within himself).

Let me make one thing very clear – Samadhi takes a person into a cave, bhakti (loving devotion for Bhagwan) takes a person into a mandir, but Gnan does not take a person anywhere. In Gnan you remain where you are, *nirdvandva* (free of doubts and dilemmas).

In bhakti you have to interact in a particular manner, in Samadhi you have to give up interaction, and in Dharma (instituted religion) you have to do rituals like Yagnas.

Tattvagnan (knowledge of the essence of the Brahman, that is also the Atma, and the substratum of all that exists), however, is such that it enables a person to go on the battlefield with an Army, trade within the country or abroad, stay with people who are committed to doing their duty, and tells people where their duty lies. He also experiences the peace of Samadhi. Gnan is that, which feels no fear

in going anywhere, coming, or staying anywhere, or taking any form of any type. Tattvagnan is a principle of courage and valor. It is not a policy of escapism and cowardice. It is not a principle that induces people to go into hiding, nor get imprisoned in any coterie.

This is the *siddhaanta* (principle) of Tattvagnan. These are the forms of Artha (wealth) – that is one siddhanta. These are forms of *bhaava* (emotions) – that is another siddhanta. And, these are forms of the *niraakaara* (formless) – this is the third siddhanta. However, these are all forms of Gnan. No form can be established without Gnan.

Therefore, you should do the Satsang (listen to spiritual discourses; associate with Mahatmas) of those who have the Tattvagnan about the swarup of the antahkarana. No matter how strong your scientific background, no matter how many scientific experiments you have done, you have not done any research on investigation about your Self; all your research is of other objects.

The true Gnan about any matter cannot be obtained through laboratory tests; it can only be obtained through Atmagnan (Gnan about the Atma; that you are the Atma that is not separate from the Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists).

Question: Maharajji, what is the difference between *gnaana* (knowledge) and *vignaana* (science)? The science available to the human race has a long history of progress. New inventions are being made daily. Isn't this vigan helpful in our obtaining the Ishwara? Please clarify these points for me.

Answer: Look; there is a Gnan that comes through research, and creates the Vedas, birds, animals and human beings.

Then, there is the Gnan that is obtained through the methods of *pratyaksha* (direct observation), *anumaana* (estimate), *upamaana* (comparison; similarities), *arthaapatti* (interpretation), *anupalabdhi* (the absence of an object that should have been there), *sambandha* (relationship; connection), or *paramparaa* (traditional practices) of *vikaasa* (development). Any object is known through one of these methods.

The Gnan by which the Ishwara and the *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) are known, is different.

The development in Time that you speak of has an imaginary line that demarcates a beginning and an end. The fact is, nobody can have the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of the beginning of Time. Time existed before what you perceive it to begin at, and even before that.

The fundamental mistake we make is when we seek the beginning of *kaala* (Time) in Time, and fail to find it. Similarly, we create the beginning of space by forming imaginary lines that separate North-

South-East-West, and come back to where we started from. Or else, we lose ourselves in darkness.

Actually, where is the *aadi* (beginning) of *de`sha* (space) and *kaala* (Time)? It is where the Gnan is. It is when Gnan gives us the awareness of space and time that they have a beginning, and when there is no awareness of them, it is *pralaya* (Dissolution). Therefore, the departments of the jeeva and the Ishwara – the difference in them – and the creation of space and time, their beginning and end, and the jeevas that experience them, is because of Gnan; and this Gnan – this *che`tanaa* (consciousness) – is *apaurushe`ya* (not created by any human being; of a divine origin).

If you have the *bhaana* (awareness) of the Ishwara, it is through this consciousness. If you have the bhaana of a jeeva it is through this consciousness. If you are aware of *de`sha-kaala-vastu* (space-time-objects) it is because of your consciousness.

Therefore, the true form of Gnan is that it is not created by anyone; it is self-established. Some people are of the opinion that insensate matter reaches a condition when consciousness develops in it. How can they experience insensate matter unless they have consciousness? Is it not something that is imagined?

Some people say that earlier, only *shoonya* (a void) existed, and this shoonya was experienced when vighnan arose. Isn't their shoonya something that is the subject of their experience? It is only through a direct personal experience that a void can be known.

Therefore, it is only through experiences that the existence of the *jada* (insensate matter), the jeeva, and the Ishwara are established. This *anubhavaatmaa vastu* (the object that is known through a direct personal experience) cannot be anything other than your Self. It

cannot be divided by space, time, or matter. Nor can it be divided by the jeeva-Ishwara. This is the Gnan that is *anaadi-ananta* (without a beginning-without an end; eternal). It is *satyam gnaanamantam brahmasvaroopa* (the essence – or true form – of Gnan that is the Brahman, the eternal pure existence), and it is nothing that is separate from our Atma.

Earlier, somebody had mentioned that the *pramaana* (proof) is established by the *prame`ya* (that, which is proved). The answer to this is that both the praman and the prameya are *anirvachaneeya* (that, which cannot be defined, because it can neither be established nor refuted). They are *alaukika* (divine; not of this world). From the viewpoint of *agnaana* (lack of enlightenment; ignorance about the Brahman) the prameya is proved by the praman. From the viewpoint of a *tattvagna* (one who knows the essence of the Brahman; an enlightened Mahatma), it is *aprame`ya* (not subject to being proved) *prame`ya svaroopa* (the essence that is established) form is self-established, and that is how the praman is established.

The Gnan that is *apaurushe`ya* (of a divine origin) has no beginning or end. Nor does it have any Acharya (Teacher who starts a new school of thought). No Acharya has founded this Gnan. It is not written in any book, and it does not come within any tradition either. No son of God or messenger of the Almighty takes an Avatar to reveal it.

The Vedas, Acharyas, Ishwara, and the *jagata* (world) are established by the Gnan that is *apaurusheya*. It is to ascertain this Gnan that people say that it was given by a particular Avatar on a particular day.

Therefore, all that you say is the *sambhaavanaa* (possibility) of a human buddhi. However, *anumaana* (inference) is a praman. Apaurusheya Gnan exists; the rest is an admixture.



Question: Maharajshri, such methods of large-scale destruction have now been created – and more are being developed – that the whole world will be destroyed if they are used. Is not Bhagwan seeing all this? If He is, why doesn't He take an Avatar to protect the world?

Answer: Someone once asked Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj, 'When will Bhagwan take an Avatar to reduce *adharma* (that, which is contrary to righteousness), since it is spreading so rapidly on this earth?'

I will say what is in my heart, and hope that you will not take it amiss. Adharma is Dharma's brother. It is not only I who says this; according to the Shatras (ancient books on religion) adharma comes into the heart, and then Dharma is needed to control it.

You would have heard descriptions of the *de`va-asura sangraama* (the mythological fight between the divine forces and the demoniac forces). This battle between the lofty and the lowly also goes on within us. When our mental inclinations clash with our conscience, there is a tussle. 'Should I do the ritual of Sandhya Vandan, go to the Club, or go and see a cinema? Or, should I go to sleep?' This, too, is a devasura sangram!

It does not seem as though there was less adharma earlier, and that it is increased now. I remember my father, grandfather, and great, great grandfather talking about the days of their childhood. 'Adharma was much less in those days,' they would say. We also say that things were much better when we were children. Perhaps this is a manner of human experiences that the past always seems rosier than the present.

However, we need to be careful about this tendency. It is not proper to criticize everything, dismissing it as adharmā. We should also look at the circumstances. We should consider the *kaala* (age), *vaya* (age), *shakti* (strength), *shikshā* (teaching), etc before declaring something to be adharmā.

So then, when Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj was asked, ‘Adharmā has increased so much! Why doesn’t Bhagwan take an Avatar to curtail it?’ he replied, ‘It is true that adharmā has increased. There are many Kansas now, not just one! However, Devki-Vasudeva are not there. If some Devki-Vasudeva appear, it is possible that Bhagwan will take an Avatar.’ (Devki-Vasudeva were Krishna Bhagwan’s parents, imprisoned by His uncle, Kansa, who was an Asura).

Therefore, when we talk about Bhagwan we should not attach our concepts of possible-impossible to it. The Ishwara can make possible what seems impossible; and He can make impossible what seems to be quite possible to us! Therefore it is not proper to think about what is possible or not possible for the Ishwara.

When we feel agitated about adharmā we should pray, ‘O Prabhu! Adharmā is filling the hearts and minds of people. It is growing with frightening speed. Please come as an Avatar to check the growth of evil, or else, send some *satpurusha* (enlightened Mahatma), or destroy evil by Your *sankalpa* (mental resolve). You have made this pledge:

*Yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya glāaniebhavati bhaarata,  
abhyuthaanamadharmasya tadaatmaanā srijaamyaham.*

*(Gita 4. 7)*

(Whenever Dharma is harmed and adharma increases, I create My form and manifest in this world.)

Everybody has the right to pray.

Regarding the possibility of Bhagwan coming in an Avatar, that hope is always present in our hearts. We say, 'Bhagwan. Please come now!' We also say, 'Bhagwan is about to manifest!' So, the better, the higher and stronger the possibility in your mind, the more pure will your thoughts become.

And, a pure mind is the earth on which Bhagwan's Avatar takes place!

Question: Maharajshri, can a human being ignore his responsibilities to his family, and get involved in spiritual activities? If both family obligations and spiritual progress are essential, how should a person do *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress) and continue to do his duties to his family?

Answer: Look; no aspect of life should be disdained, whether it is the personal, family life, social life, past life, religious life, life connected to the State and Country, etc. Every part of life that is proper should be fulfilled.

*Bhajana* (loving meditation of Bhagwan) is not done only by doing the *maalaa* (prayer beads), or sitting in a mandir, or donning a particular kind of dress, wearing saffron robes, applying *chandana* (sandalwood paste) and keeping long hair!

What is the *udde'shya* (purpose; goal) of your activities – this is what is to be seen in the bhajan you do. Whatever kind of work you do – it may be cutting grass – but is the purpose behind it to clear the path of thorns, for the benefit of the people who use that path, or is it to feed the animals and birds? If that be the purpose, your intention is *uttama* (excellent).

Similarly, in the work you do for your family or society becomes excellent if done with benevolent intentions. The *pavitrataa* (purity, according to the Shatras), superiority, and appropriateness of your work is not evaluated by the work itself, but by the motive behind it. If you give some thought to this, you will know how superior the spiritual level of your work is.

There is a play in Sanskrit, called, 'Prabodha Chandrodaya'. It was written some five or six hundred years ago. It has a scene that shows a scantily dressed Punditji (Brahmin) who goes to bathe in the holy Gangaji, on Benares' Dashashvamedge Ghat. After his bath, he sits on one of the wooden platforms, with ash smeared on his forehead, and his mala in his hand.

His purpose was not to do sadhana; he sat there to watch the ladies bathing there! Punditji's sitting on the bank of Gangaji, his smearing ash on his forehead, and pretense of doing *japa* (ritual chanting), were motivated by a lowly sensuality. Thus, sometimes even that which appears to be Dharma turns out to be adharma.

So, don't neglect any *kartavya* (duty). Do everything you should, whether it is for an individual, family, or society, after giving due consideration to its being the right thing to do. That is the purpose of bhajan.

If someone does the japa of the Gayatri Mantra for obtaining wealth, he will get wealth, but his *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle ego of individuality) will not be purified. It will be purified if he does the Gayatri Mantra with the feeling that Bhagwan will be pleased with his effort.

Therefore, external actions are not so important; the intentions behind the action are important. Your purpose should be pure. If your intention is pure, the work you do will automatically be pure.

Question: Maharajshri, how can we establish *sukha-shaanti* (happiness-peace) in the family, and what can we do to make it endure?

Answer: There is a village, some two miles from ours. A Thakur Saheb lived there. At that time, he was about seventy five years old. He had a huge family of some sixty three or sixty five people, including the children. They had a common kitchen. The duty of cooking the different meals was delegated among the ladies of the family.

One day I asked Thakur Saheb how he managed such a huge family. ‘Babaji’, he said (I had not become a Monk at that time), ‘I do not eat until I have ascertained that each and every member of the family have had their meal. Sometimes it is four in the afternoon before I have lunch. This is my rule.’

This is the method of looking after the family. The friction that arises in a family is due to the urge to have things the way one wants. But, every person has his or her own wishes – how long will other people sacrifice their wishes to please one person?

Therefore, the more you respect the wishes of other people, the more will *sukha-shanti* and goodwill prevail in your family. We tend to think that our judgment is best, our wishes are the most reasonable, our behavior is the most appropriate; and the ideas of others are faulty, their behavior is not what it should be. That is why families get broken up.

Our *nirdosha* (pure; free of faults) Atma identifies with our *vritti* (mental inclinations) and *vyavahaara* (behavior), and the result of

this is that our ego is strengthened to such an extent that we fail to see our own faults. We only see the faults in others.

However, there is no human being who never makes mistakes. If there is some fault in our behavior, we should give our opinion only after listening to what the others have to say. If the senior-most family member speaks his mind first, others will hesitate to say what they think.

Yudhishtira would listen to the opinions of Bhimasena, Arjuna, Nakul, Sahdev and Draupadi, and then say what he felt was best. The head of the family should follow his example, and, as far as possible, include the suggestions of others in the final decision. The thoughts and wishes of others should be given due respect. You should never say, 'Your intellect is not very bright,' to anyone.

I have seen in small families that the wife is upset because her husband doesn't do what she wants, and the husband is upset because the wife does not do what he wants. When we disregard the feelings of others, it creates friction between people.

The method of retaining peace at home is that the younger members of the family should do *pranaama* (bow down respectfully) to their elders. They should stand up when an elder person comes into the room, and ask him to sit in the most comfortable chair. If you have to sacrifice your preference to please another, do so. If you have to bear some loss to make another person happy, bear it ungrudgingly. Don't think only about yourself – think about all the family members.

This does not apply only to the family; it applies to all society, the State, and the Country. Actually one should have due consideration for all society and all humanity. If this is done, no Country, State, or religious sect can disrupt our peaceful coexistence.

Why do we give greater importance to our own wishes, than the wishes of others? It is to enhance our *abhimaana* (pride). Why has our pride increased? It is because we have forgotten the Satya – the eternal (existence) – in which our pride is not worth tuppence! We take pride in paltry things, and superimpose greatness on ourselves, disdaining the knowledge and intelligence of others. We thus insult their character and personality. This is why misunderstanding, friction, and strife are created everywhere. We need to be careful about this, and behave in an appropriate manner.

Shri Yashpal Jain told me something yesterday. I will tell you what he said, since it is pertinent to what we are talking about. Vinoba Bhave toured the whole country for fifteen years, during his *bhoo-daana* (donating land to the landless) movement. At the end of this period, he said, 'In my extensive touring of the country, I did not meet a single person who was bad.' Yashpalji told him, 'That is because of the magnanimity of your outlook.'

Everybody should cultivate such a magnanimous outlook. Our tendency is to think that others are bad and we are good. This is either hypocrisy or foolishness! We either don't understand that we, too have faults, or else we try to hide them from others, to impress upon them how good we are! We should be alert about observing the faults in our thinking and behavior, and remove these faults.

That is the way to have sukha-shanti in your home and family.



Question: Maharajji, what is *nishkamataa* (being free of worldly selfish desires), and how can it come into our life?

Answer: The *nishkamata* mentioned so liberally in books and magazines is not so easy to attain! As long as you have the urge to obtain *sukha* (happiness) from external objects, and have the *bhraanti* (false understanding) of being the *bhoktaa* (the one who feels pleasure and pain) you cannot help making another your *bhogya* (the object of enjoyment). There will always be a *bhavanaa* (feeling of attachment or aversion) in this.

No *bhakta* (true devotee of Bhagwan) can be *nishkaama* (free of selfish worldly considerations). Anyone who takes pleasure from any object, individual, somebody's personality, somebody's company, parting from someone, eating, drinking, enjoyments, the lifestyle of the body, his own talk and feelings, cannot be fully *nishkama*.

Therefore, the *sankalpa* (mental resolve) to be *nishkama* has to start with a prayer, 'O Bhagwan, please reduce my selfish inclinations.' You must make a determined effort to strengthen your resolve. The best thing to do is to associate with a person who you believe to be *nishkama*.

It is not *nishkamata* when people earn wealth by unethical means, indulge in sensual pleasures, and say that they do everything with a *nishkama bhava*! This is making fun of *nishkamata*.

Shri Jaidayalji Goendka, founder of the Gita Press, spoke a lot about *nishkama bhavana*. He would refer to the description of *nishkama*

bhava given in the Gita. One day, I asked him, 'Where is such nishkamata to be found?'

'I want people to be unselfish,' he explained. 'This is my purpose when I speak about having nishkama bhava. I want people to be as unselfish as possible in their dealings. The nishkamata you are referring to – or wish to promote – is not easy to attain, but if selfish tendencies can be reduced, nishkamata will slowly come into people's lives.'

Nishkamata and *antahkarana shuddhi* (purification of the antahkarana. The antahkarana is composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality), nishkamata and Atma shuddhi, are all names of the same object. That is why it is said in the Gita:

*Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyktvaatmashuddhaye`.*

(5. 11)

(All the actions of a Yogi are for antahkarana shuddhi.)

If Atma shuddhi is what you desire, you should not be attached to any bhoga (sensual pleasure) saying, 'I cannot give this up'. You should have no *aasakti* (attachment) for any place, saying, 'I cannot leave this place'. You should have no attachment for any person, saying, 'This person must be with me'. And, you should not be attached to any *karma* (action; work) saying, 'I will definitely do this!'

The good qualities superimposed on any karma are due to *ape`kshaa* (expectation; need). A person has different expectations or needs, before he gets a *yagnopaveeta* (sacred thread), and they change after he gets it. A man has a different *apeksha* after he becomes a *vaanaprastha* (turning away from the world and towards Bhagwan,

when he reaches middle age), and different after he takes Sanyasa (renounces every worldly consideration).

So, you should not get so attached to work that you cannot give it up. Give up all *nishiddha* (forbidden) karmas first. Then give up the *kaamanaa* (worldly desires) in the *vihita karma* (prescribed actions). After that, give up the *kartrittva* (feeling that you are the doer of the action) even in nishkama karmas. When this is done, you have to give up the subtle pride of *akartrittva* (that you are not the doer) by taking the *aashraya* (refuge) of the fundamental Tattva (essence; the Brahman, the substratum of all that exists).

Our thinking should either be so subtle that the *aavarana* (covering) that hides our *svaroopa* (essential nature; true form) is destroyed, or our surrender to Bhagwan should be so complete that His Grace removes all worldly desires from our heart.

Therefore, if you desire nishkamata, use this sankalpa to become nishkama. Resolve that you will never allow your actions to be motivated by selfishness. All you do should be with the feeling that you are doing your ordained duty, to please Bhagwan, purify your antahkarana, or obtain Gnan about the Satya (the pure existence that can never be negated; the Brahman).

This is how a person can develop the habit of destroying selfish desires. Lay all your selfish desires at the feet of Bhagwan, whatever they may be, and try to reduce your desires for any form of worldly gratification. Your heart will gradually become nishkama, and your resolve will be strengthened.

Question: Maharajshri, in this present age of *yantras* (machines; technology) how can machinery be harmonious with *aadhyaatmikataa* (spiritual matters)? Isn't technology turning us away from *adhyatma* (metaphysical matters)?

Answer: Machinery and science are a great necessity. If neglected by our country, religious sects etc, it will result in our becoming backward in the world. Our life will become like the lives of animals!

Think of what would happen if we were to stop using the railway, electricity, loudspeakers, and other conveniences. Without these we would be boycotted by the age this world is living in. Therefore, we should accept the benefits technology and science can give to mankind.

However, there is a level of worldly progress. Do you have the hope that a man who drives the train or a car will have a *japa thailee* (cloth bag for prayer beads) in his hand, and do japa (ritual chanting) as he drives the train or car?

However, prayer is also a part of life that should be accepted. Spirituality is not something that is attained by going to a temple or a mountain cave, or thinking about the *ghataakaasha-mathaakaasha* (the inner space and the space outside the body are not separate).

The organs in your body are also yantras. Just as there are different machines in a factory, the way our body is built is just like a factory. If you obtain a proper understanding about how the *che`tanaa* (consciousness) that runs through our body is connected to the consciousness that pervades the world, you will have no problem in

using the technology in the world. There is no clash between science and spirituality.

However, the dwindling inclination for metaphysical matters in society leads us to think that this age of science is detrimental to our Atma, or our spiritual progress. If you go deep into the matter, you will find that even an atom or a particle of matter has a *shakti* (power; force) within it. That shakti also has an *aashraya* (shelter; refuge) and even that ashray has a *parama adhishtaana* (supreme substratum), and the Parameshwara is its *prakaashaka* (the one who illuminates).

Even if you think about it from the scientific viewpoint, it can be of considerable help in bringing you closer to obtaining the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of the Atma (the Self, which is not separate from the Brahman, and is the substratum of all that exists).

If you antipathy for science and technology leads you to believe them to be inimical, you cannot even cook your meals! The modern cooking facilities – steam cooker, oven, and even a bicycle – are all scientific inventions!

New inventions should not be misused; they should be beneficial for the world. There is no reason to fear the progress of science. This will also become a *saadhana* (method) for s to obtain spiritual Gnan.

Question: Maharajshri, to what extent are *dharmacharana* (living according to the strictures of Dharma) and *dharmapala* (obeying the strictures of Dharma) helpful in obtaining Moksha (liberation from rebirth)? Please tell us something about this.

Answer: Moksha will be obtained by a person who wants Moksha. Dharma (instituted religion) stands in-between, controlling the Artha (wealth), and Kama (desires) in our lives.

Our *indriya* (five sense organs and five organs of action) need to be restrained, and our *mano-vritti* (mental inclinations) also need to be kept under control. Dharma is the *shakti* (power; force) that controls the actions and inclinations, stopping us from doing things that ought not to be done. Dharma is not a *paroksha* (unseen) *vastu* (object); it is *pratyaksha* (perceptible) – ‘*dhaaranaat dharmah*’ – Dharma is that, which upholds and preserves.

There is a description in the ‘Dharma Sootra’:

*Yam tvaarthah kriyamaanam tu aaryah prashanti.*

(*Aapad Dharma Sootra 1. 7. 7*)

Dharma is a perceptible object from which an *apoorva* (unseen latent fruit) is created. This settles in the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankara* = subtle ego of individuality), and gives its fruit when the time is ripe.

Thus, Dharma controls Artha and Kama on the one hand, and on the other hand, it purifies our antahkarana, opening up the road to

Moksha. You should not interpret Dharma as being restricted to doing rituals like *homa* (pouring oblations into the sacred fire) in a Yagnashala (a place where such rituals are held), going on pilgrimages, or taking *mauna vrata* (a vow of silence for a stipulated time). Doubtless, these are also Dharma, but don't confine Dharma to any *karma* (action) or *sthaana* (place). Keep Dharma with you, whether you are in your shop, office, factory, on a train, in a car, or walking on the road. Wherever you are, Dharma is the only security guard that can stop you from wrongdoing.

Dharma has been given a very limited form by people who say that Dharma is only what their Acharya (Teacher who founded their Sect) or Paigambar (Prophet) have said, or what is written in a particular book. This is not proper. When we disdain the voice of Dharma that rises in our heart, and seek Dharma in the outer world, the inner voice gradually becomes weaker and weaker. Its power to stop us from indulging in wrong things becomes ineffective. Therefore, we should always examine the Dharma in our heart before doing anything, to make sure that our action is not contrary to the eternal righteousness. Whether we want some sensual indulgences, or worldly interaction, we should weight it on the scales of Dharma.

Regarding Moksha – as long as you believe that you can obtain it through some action, by the Grace of some Devta (divine force), or by going to some holy place – that Mukti (Moksha) will be borrowed and useless.

You can get Mukti only when you free your Atma from this *aavarana* (covering of ignorance about the Brahman) and worldly bondage. At present, we are aware only of the need for Dharma. Without Dharma, it is useless to talk about Moksha.

Question: Maharajshri, these days *asatya* (falsehood) prevails everywhere. It is not possible to live without telling lies; even in a Court of Law! Then, should *asatya* be accepted as unavoidable?

Answer: A group of us were once sitting at the Gita Vatika in Gorakhpur. Pundit Laxman Narain Garde was there, Bhuvaneshwar Prasad Mishra – ‘Madhav’ – was there, Devdharji Sharma was there, and a few others, and myself.

One man said, ‘Everybody has become *be`eemaana* (dishonest) these days.’

Gardeji said, ‘Look, my brother, your experience about yourself may be right, but regarding others, it is only what you imagine.’

You need to inspect your antahkarana (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle ego of individuality) about why you do not encounter *satyavaadee* (honest and truthful) people. Why is it that you see only *asatya* everywhere? Is there indeed no *satya* (truth) in the world? Even ‘no’ is a *satya*! When we say, ‘is not’, that is also a *Satya*. And, when we say ‘is’, in the ‘is not’, it is meant to authenticate the ‘not’. The ‘not’ is attached to the *satya* ‘is’.

This is one point. If someone takes the *aashraya* (refuge) of *asatya*, and says he will speak only *asatya*, can he do this? If he starts doing some work, and someone asks him what he is doing, he may say, ‘I am lying down’. Similarly, if he is lying down and someone asks him what he is doing, he may say, ‘I am walking’. If he gives the name of



‘walking’ to lying down, and ‘sleeping’ to working, the names will be changed, but the satya will remain.

Now see another point. There is a great burden in asatya. If a man tells a lie, he has to tell many more lies in order to sustain the first lie. He has to remember the lies he has said, so that he says nothing that will expose his lies. But when a man speaks the truth, there is no burden – he can speak the truth unhesitatingly, at any time.

Even now you will see the same thing in *vyavahaara* (interaction) – people call the ears the ears, the eyes the eyes, the nose the nose, the hands the hands, and the feet the feet. Nobody tells a lie by calling the nose an eye! Therefore, your seeing asatya being spoken everywhere is also asatya.

I do not know who the person is, who has placed this question. I ask him to not take offence if my answer is not to his liking. Do you have a *yatharthha gnaana* (factual knowledge) about Satya? Do you know the Satya that is not affected by objects and individuals? The fact is, you create a small satya in your mind, and get so attached to it that you begin to see others as asatya. These days, Rama-bhaktas consider Krishna-bhaktas to be asatya, and Krishna-bhaktas consider Rama-bhaktas to be asatya. In the same way, Shiva-bhaktas and Vishnu-bhaktas consider each other asatya. Those who believe in the *niraakaara* (formless Brahman) and *saakaara* (the Ishwara with form) believe each other to be asatya.

The *aatmavaadee* (who believe everything to be the Atma) and the *anaatmavaadee* (who don’t believe that there is any Atma) consider each other to be asatya.

Such small-minded thinking, petty beliefs, and narrow-minded attitudes lead to considering others small, or great. This is not a sign

of wisdom. Without further elaboration, I will only suggest that you make yourself *satya-vaadee* (always speaking the truth), *satya-karma* (do good deeds), and *satya-sankalpa* (have good resolves). Create *satya-bhaava* (universal benevolence), *satya-vichaara* (think good thoughts), and *satya-anubhavee* (experience the Satya).

When you, yourself, become satya-anubhavi, you will see that interaction is a *prakaasha* (effulgence; brightness) of Satya. There is no reason to sully your heart about this. To think, 'Everyone else is a liar; I will go and improve them. I will make them truthful' is to delude yourself. Even Bhagwan has not done this! How can you think that everyone will become truthful by your efforts?

So, first become satyavadi yourself, and then see!

Question: Maharajshri, these days it seems that Bhagwan's bhaktas face all kinds of suffering, but people who are turned away from Bhagwan live happily in comfort and luxury. Is this due to *prarabdha* (destiny created by actions in past lives), or some other factor?

Answer: Well, my brother – what is it that you are saying? *Dukha* (sorrow) cannot enter the heart that has *bhagvat-bhakti* (bhakti for Bhagwan) in it. Where is there any scope for dukha in a place where Bhagwan is seated, and His *pre`ma* (pure love) abides?

One *pe`hchaana* (distinguishing factor) of bhakti is that it dries up the *prarabdha*. That means, it soaks up all the suffering that comes into the outer life of a bhakta, but that suffering may even be a *bhram* (false understanding) of ours.

People believe that a person who has a lovely house, friends who flatter, wealth, a beautiful wife, etc is a happy person. All these are mistaken assumptions. When we compare their lives to the lives of bhaktas, it seems these apparently fortunate people are not really happy.

If you look at it from the viewpoint of a bhakta's heart, the condition of a bhakta's heart is limpid and bright. It does not let Shri Krishna remain in Goloka, or Shri Rama in Saket loka. Nor does it let the Ishwara be *niraakaara-nirguna* (formless-without attributes). The state of a bhakta's *hridaya* (heart) is such that it draws the Paramatma into itself.

You should be having an idea that a person is happy when he has certain worldly advantages in his life. Actually, this idea is the cause of great sorrow, and a person suffers in his efforts to attain all the worldly things he believes will make him happy.

So, let go of your ideas of worldly happiness, and leave everything to Bhagwan. Say, like Swami Haridas of Vrindavan, '*Jyonhee jyonhee rakhiyata haun, tyonhee tyonhee rahiyata haun, he` hari*' (as You keep me, so I live, O Hari).

Once this feeling comes into the heart, dukha cannot touch you. Your tongue will neither criticize no eulogize anybody; it will only chant 'Krishna! Krishna!' and 'Rama, Rama!' Your thoughts will not turn to any dacoits, thieves, or immoral person. Thoughts of the Parameshwara glow and flow in your consciousness like a sweet stream. Your goal is the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of the Paramatma. You sit in the Paramatma, you sleep in the Paramatma, and you are in Him when you are awake. Then how can you feel any sorrow?

You have built up a false picture about *sukha* (happiness) in your mind, and this is what makes you see dukha in the lives of bhaktas. Have you ever seen any *virakta* (possession-less) Sadhu on the bank of the Gangaji? Have you ever seen Sadhus in Vrindavan, Ayodhya, and Kashi (Varanasi)?

A Sadhu gives a message to the poor and the rich alike. He tells the poor, 'Look; I have no possessions, and yet I am happy.' To the rich, his message is, 'I am happy in spite of having nothing. You people are killing yourselves in the effort to accumulate wealth.' The Sadhu stands as a symbol of contentment, reducing the friction between

the poor and the rich. Why, then, do you imagine that sukha lies in worldly wealth?

Oh, the seeming sukha you see is weighed down by the things to which you attach so much importance. The search for worldly sukha makes a man lose his Atma, in his efforts to earn, accumulate, protect, and maintain wealth, and then in spending it. What makes you imagine that such a man is *sukhi* (happy)?

There is no search for the sukha of Bhagwan's bhakti, for the *rasa* (sweetness) and anand of His bhakti. The life of a bhakta may contain no external facilities, but his heart is immersed in *paramaananda* (supreme joyfulness). A bhakta is never *dukhi* (sorrowful). What you see is what you imagine to be dukha, and this makes you feel sukhi.

Question: Maharajshri, what is *de`haabhimaana* (identification with the body)? And, what is the method for becoming free of it?

Answer: Dehabhiman is seated within us, whereas the one who gives *upade`sha* (teaching) – and the upadesh – are outside. If they merge – the one who gives the teaching and the teaching itself – your dehabhiman can be destroyed within minutes! If you feel thirsty in a dream, your thirst won't be quenched by the water of your waking state; and if you are thirsty when you are awake, your thirst won't be quenched by the water you drink in a dream.

I will tell you something more. Nobody really has the *abhimaana* (pride) of the *de`ha* (body). Nobody feels, 'I am a sack of bones, flesh, skin, stool and urine.' People identify with their body when others praise their beauty, learning, caste, etc. People say, 'You are a Brahmin'; the *braahmanattva* (being a Brahmin) is imagined, and the person develops a pride of being a Brahmin.

Someone says, 'You are very learned', and the person imagines the learning to be connected to his physical form. A pride of being learned develops in him. In the same way, people develop pride when they are told that they are born in a good *jaati* (caste), *varnaashrama* (status and stage of life), are very rich, have a good reputation, etc. These are superimpositions that give birth to pride, but the natural objects that come from Bhagwan do not create pride. The 'good' and 'bad' are external superimpositions connected to the body.

If you wish to give up the subtle ego of individuality – your dehabhiman – let go of all the *adhyaaropa* (superimposed factors connected to the body) that you have accumulated since your birth. Keep meditating on what you were when you were in your mother's womb, or in your father's seed before coming into your mother's womb, or in the grain before coming into your father's seed, and in the rays of the sun and moon before that. Keep going within by this method.

There is no *abhimaan* (pride) in the deha. A fictional impression has been stamped on your mind, that you are a Shaiva (worshipper of Shiva), a Shakta (worshipped of the Primordial Mother), a Christian, a Muslim, a Jain, a Hindu, a Parsee, etc. People develop the pride of these superimposed beliefs and walk on the path of friction.

Yes, do make good use of these imagined factors. There is a Punditji. Someone came and told him, 'Punditji, please help me by giving a false testimony in my favor. I will pay well for your help.'

'Get out of here!' said the Punditji. 'I am a Brahmin. I do the purification ritual of Sandhya Vandan every day. I do *japa* (ritual chanting) of the Gayatri Mantra. Is it my job to tell falsehoods?' The man went away. The Punditji was saved from giving a false testimony.

Here, the pride of being a Brahmin protected the Punditji from wrongdoing. This was putting his pride to good use. However, if the Punditji were to tell someone, 'I am a Brahmin – you are a Shudra (low caste),' it would be insulting someone because of his pride of being a Brahmin, and that abhiman would be completely wrong.

Thus, the first thing is, do not misuse your abhiman. Then, focus on Bhagwan's *akhanda sattaa* (infinite pure existence). I know wealthy

people who feel humble when they go abroad and see people who are far richer than them. Great Rajas, Maharajas, millionaires go to America and become flatterers, cow-towing to the multimillionaires there.

So, if you have pride about anything, look at the people who are greater. The Parameshwara is the greatest of all. If you keep your focus on the Parameshwara your abhiman will dissolve.

If you are troubled by poverty, look at those who are poorer than you. The sorrow of your poverty will not overcome you. If you want to let go of your abhiman about your learning, think of how one blow can make a person lose his consciousness and all his learning.

There is a man in Vrindavan. Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh had him dressed up like a Raja, to campaign for him in elections. A decorative feather was attached to his turban and a sword to his waist. He would ride through the districts, asking people to vote for the Raja.

The horse stumbled at one spot, and the man fell off. The injury on his head resulted in a total loss of memory. He did regain consciousness, but his memory did not return. He had to be taught his alphabet all over again!

Thus, the education and expertise of which we feel so proud have no intrinsic value of its own. One Seth (wealthy businessman) told me, 'Swamiji, I was a multimillionaire at eight o'clock in the morning, and at eleven o'clock I had become a pauper! I lost all my wealth in a span of three hours!'

All the factors that cause pride are false. People who have great wisdom and learning lose their balance of mind. They make grave mistakes. So, give thought to this abhiman. You will see that it is



destroyed as soon as you turn towards the Ishwara. When you do *vichaara* (give serious thought) you realize that the abhiman is not for the deha; it is for the ideas people stuff into our minds.

Abhiman is baseless, and totally to be given up.

Question: Maharajji, the Vedantis say that Mukti (liberation from the cycle of rebirth) is not possible unless a person obtains Tattvagnan (knowledge about the essence of the Brahman). However, Bhagwan Shri Krishna has, Himself, said in the Gita, '*Sarvadharmāna parityajya māmēkam śaranam vraja, aham tvāṁ sarvapaapēbhyaḥ mokṣayishyāmi mā śuḥ*' (18. 66)'. This means, 'Come into My *sharana* (refuge). I will free you from all sin.' Does Vedanta concur with Bhagwan's words?

Answer: This is an excellent question! The *bhakta* (people who love Bhagwan devotedly) believe in one Mukti where they become citizens of Bhagwan's divine land. This is called 'Salokya Mukti'. Some bhaktas have a desire to dress exactly like Bhagwan and become a member of His Court. That is called 'Sarupya Mukti'. Some bhaktas want to become a flower in Bhagwan's garland, or a bee that hovers around it. This is called 'Sameepya Mukti', because they want to stay close to Bhagwan in any form. Some bhaktas want to become a sweet sherbet that Bhagwan will drink and relish. They want to merge into Him. This is called 'Sayujya Mukti'.

Apart from these four types of Mukti, the Bhagwat Mahapurana describes one more kind of Mukti, called 'Saarshti Mukti'. The meaning of this is that the bhakta should be made a ruler, like the Brahma, of some *brahmaanda* (universe), or the Indra (King of the Devtas in Heaven) of some realm. Such bhaktas are Gnani (enlightened) bhaktas.

The Yogis, however, believe in a 'Kaivalya Mukti', where the person negates even the feeling of being a *drashtaa* (uninvolved witness),

and is conscious only of being the non-dual pure existence. He attains a state of deep meditation where not even the seed of thought exists.

The form of the Mukti the Vedantis believe in is different from any of these. In the opinion of Vedanta, when a person gets the realization that the Atma and the Brahman are one, his *avidyaa* (nescience) is removed. The *adviteeya* (non-dual) *pratyak chaitanyaabhinna brahm* (Brahman that is experienced as one's own pure consciousness) is the real Mukti.

The Buddhists believe Mukti to be attained when all desire is annihilated. The Jains believe that Mukti is attained when a person touches the effulgent inner sky, and the Naiyayikas believe that Mukti is attained when all false knowledge is dispelled.

People have thus created different concepts of Mukti. A person obtains Mukti as per his belief and *saadhanaa* (effort) for it. The Mukti of Advaita (non-dual) Vedanta is attained only by the Gnan that the Atma and the Brahman are one and the same. Mukti exists, but it is unknown because of *agnana* (ignorance; lack of Gnan). As soon as agnan is removed, the person realizes that his Atma is *mukta-svaroopa* (the essence that is eternally free).

What you have said about Shri Krishna is fully appropriate in its own context. Bhagwan's speech is such that it includes the good of the *sattvagunee* (people established in the lofty tendency of Sattaa guna), *rajogunee* (people established in the mixed tendency of Rajo guna) and the *tamogunee* (people established in the lowly tendency of Tamo guna). Bhagwan's speech is filled with Sat (pure existence), *chit* (pure consciousness) and *aananda* (pure joy).

Some people believe that Bhagwan's speech contains nothing for the *dharmaatmaa* (people who adhere to instituted religion), but that is not true. Similarly, it is wrong to say that Bhagwan's speech has nothing for bhaktas, Yogis, and Vedantis. Whatever Bhagwan says is meant for all His children. It is for the benefit of all, including moths and insects, for the *brahmavaadee* (those who believe in the Brahman), humans, animals, bhaktas, Gnanis, and all others. This is why everybody can get the quintessence of their own principle.

*Aham tvaa sarvapaape`bhyao mokshayishyaami maa shuchah.*

(18. 66)

(I will free you of all sin; do not grieve.)

What does '*maa shuchah*' mean here? Meaning, what does it mean when Bhagwan says, 'Do not grieve'? You see, Bhagwan started this sermon by saying, '*Ashochaananva shochastvam* (2. 11) – you are grieving over that, which is not worthy of grief.' That is why He concludes by saying, '*maa shuchah* – do not grieve'. This *e`kataa* (one theme) is called the *nivritti* (removal) of *shoka* (grief).

*Tatra ko mohah kah shokah e`katvamanupashyatah.*

(*Ishopanishad* 7)

(When one sees everything as the non-dual Brahman, where is there any scope for delusion or grief?)

Arjuna had experienced shoka first – *shoka-sanvigna-maanasa* (1. 47) – grief filled his heart. Bhagwan dispelled it. This shloka describes the kind of *sharanaagati* (surrendering to Bhagwan's protection) that is needed for shoka to be removed.

*Sarvadharmaan parityajya maame`kam sharanam vraja (18. 66)*

(Give up all Dharma and take refuge in Me alone)

In the opinion of Madhusudan Saraswati, you can follow the Brahmacharya Dharma (live as ordained for a celibate student), Grihastha Dharma (live as ordained for a married householder), Vanaprastha Dharma (live as ordained for a middle-aged person who turns away from the outer world, in search of Bhagwan), etc, but have the faith that it is Bhagwan whose *kripaa* (Grace) will give you *kalyaana* (salvation).

Shankaracharya bhagwan says that there are many Shastras (ancient books of religion) about giving up *adharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma), but the Dharma that remains after adharma is given up has a feeling of *kartaapana* (the subtle pride of being the doer of actions) remains. This creates an *apoorva* (latent fruit that is bestowed in due course) in the person's heart. Nobody has any *vidhi* (prescribed method) for giving up this apoorva. It is only the method of Vedanta that says, '*Sarvadharmaan parityajya*'. It is only when a person experiences that he has given up all Dharma that he is freed of the apoorva of doing good deeds.

What is this?

When you feel, 'Nobody can give up his Self; his Atma', it is a general belief, because the Atma cannot be given up; only the *anaatmaa* (that, which is not the Atma) can be given up.

The meaning of '*sarvadharmaan parityajya*' is, to give up all that is the anatma, and the Dharma (essential nature) of the anatma. 'Parityajya' means, since it is certain that the giving up of one's *svaroop*a (essence; true form) is not possible, and what should be

given up are all other things; well – other things are already given up, anyway! Here, the meaning of ‘parityajya’ is, *parityaktve`na avabuddham* – this (object) is not me; it is not mine; nor is it Satya.

Giving this Gnan is *parityaja*, and *maame`kam sharanam vraja – e`kam maam sharanam vraja* – means, ‘I am the *adviteeya* (non-dual) *adhishtaana svaroop*a (the essence that is the substratum of all that exists). *Sharanam griharakshito* – all are in Me. They get their *sattaa* (existence) from My *sattaa*. Obtain this Tattvagnan (knowledge about My essence) – *vraja, jaaneehi*. I will manifest in the form of your Atma, and free you from *avidyaa* (nescience; ignorance about the Brahman), and all *paapa* (sins) that are committed due to avidya.’

‘Agnan (about the Brahman) is the biggest paapa. I will free you from agnan. Therefore, do not grieve.’

I have given a very brief explanation of this. It can take months to give a proper explanation. There is a commentary even in the Shrimad Bhagwat Purana on ‘*sarvadharmaan parityajya*’ and ‘*saranaagati*’ (taking refuge in Bhagwan). Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that the Bhagwat is a commentary on the Gita and the Brahma Sutra. There are two or three references to the Gita, and this shloka is particular –

*Mayaadishtaanaapi svakaan dharmaan santyajya,  
yah sarvaan maam bhaje`t sa sattamah.*

Please keep in mind here, that *dharma-tyaaga* (giving up Dharma) does not mean doing *adharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma)! Adharma is given up long ago! Now, Arjuna has to give up the support of Dharma and merge into Bhagwan. That is why Bhagwan

said, 'Give up even the Dharma that I have told you to do, and devote yourself entirely to My bhajan (loving meditation of Bhagwan).'

What is bhajan?

'*Bhajanam naama rasanam*' (bhajan means to take delight in thinking about Bhagwan). The shadow – or reflection – of *paramaananda* (supreme bliss) is experienced in the antahkarana (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankara* = the subtle pride of individuality). Savor it. Do bhajan. Just as an ox eats its food and then sits and chews the cud leisurely, enjoying it and digesting it, you should savor the *upade'sha* (teachings) you have heard. You have heard the upadesha about Dharma and bhakti, and know the *svaroopa-svabhaava* (essence; true form – essential nature) of Bhagwan. Bring it into your heart again and again. Mentally chew over the things you have heard and read about Bhagwan. This is called 'bhajan'.

Elsewhere, Bhagwan has told Uddhavji:

*Tasmaattvamuddhavotsrija chodanaam pratichodanaam,*

*pravrittam cha nivrittam cha shrotavyam shrutame`va cha.*

*Maame`kame`va sharanamaatmaanam sarvade`hinaam,*

*yaahi sarvaatmabhaave`na mayaa syaa hyakutobhayah.*

(Bhagwat 11. 12. 14-15)

Earlier, on the battlefield, Bhagwan had explained about sharanagati to Arjuna. Now, He says the same thing to Uddhavaji. 'Uddhava, let go of *vidhi-nishe`dha* (following the rules – going against the rules).

Let go of *pravritti-nivritti* (being involved in worldly actions – withdrawing from worldly activities). If you do not like *nivritti*, what will you get from *pravritti*? If *nivritti* is a cause for *bodha* (grasping the truth), *pravritti* is a cause for *jignaasaa* (wanting to know the Truth).

Let go of all these, and come here! Remove from your mind all the things you have heard, and also stop thinking about the things you are yet to hear about. And then – *maame`kam sharanam* – come into My sharan.'

Oh, I can come into Your sharan only if You meet me.

The answer to this is, '*Aatmaanam sarvam de`hinaam* – I am seated in the heart of all as their Atma, as the *amrita-svaroopaa* (immortal essence) *antaryaamee* (abiding within). So, just surrender to Me alone. Merge into Me, and become *nirbhaya* (fearless).'

You should pay attention to the question Shri Krishna asked Arjuna after telling him about sharanagati. He asked, 'Is your agnan, *sammoha* (deluded thinking) destroyed or not?'

*Kachchidagnaanasammohah pranashtaste` dhananjayah.*

(Gita 18. 72)

This is Shri Krishna's question after the sermon He gave Arjuna about surrendering wholly to Him. If you have *pre`ma* (love) for the *saguna-saakaara* (with attributes-with form), and you take His sharanagati, you will obtain His protection through your bhakti.

If you want the experience of the *nirguna-niraakaara* (without attributes – without form) *pratyak chaitanyaabhinna brahm* (the



Brahman that is known only as the consciousness we experience personally), you will need Tattvagnan.

Bhagwan can give Tattvagnan to His bhaktas, too, provided they want Gnan! Gnan cannot be given forcibly to anyone who has no inclination for it. This is the rule of Gnan. Bhagwan can give Gnan only to a *jignasu* (one who wants Gnan).

If a bhakta is not a jignasu Bhagwan may take him into His divine realm and make him a citizen there, or dress him like Himself, or make him the ruler of some realm, or keep him in His service. Or merge him into Himself. Bhagwan wants everything for His bhaktas, and if the bhakta has a desire for Gnan, Bhagwan certainly gives him Gnan as well.

Question: Please tell us something about Bhagwan Shri Krishna's *saundarya-maadhurya* (beauty-sweetness).

Answer: For this you should read, and listen to, the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana and the books of the Ramanuja Sect, that describe Bhagwan's *svabhaava* (essential nature) and *leela* (divine play). You should also study the descriptions given in the books of Nimbarkacharya's Sect, which describe the love of Shri Radha-Krishna, called the *yugal sarkaara* (two Masters), who are two forms of one essence. What am I to tell you about Shri Krishna's sublime beauty and sweetness in such a short time?

It is written in one place, in the *sampradaaya* (tradition) of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu that Shri Krishna looked into a mirror one day. Our eyes can't see Him; in fact, they can't see anyone at all! Nobody knows how beautiful their own eyes are! So, Bhagwan looked at Himself in a mirror. He saw His smooth, glowing cheeks, His beautifully molded nose, eyes, and forehead. When He saw the faint smile on His lips, He was astonished by His own loveliness.

'I have never seen Myself before – who is this amazingly attractive person?' He thought. He was so captivated by His own beauty that He got the feeling, '*Ahamapi paribhoktum kaamaye`raadhike`* - had I been Radha, I would have married this man. He would be My husband; My beloved!'

The same thing is said in the Bhagwat. Shri Krishna is filled with wonder at His own divine beauty. *Bhooshanam bhooshanaangam* – His *bhooshana* (ornaments) are beautified by His form; it is not that they add to the beauty of His form! The ancient books on beauty and

adornment have a word, '*vicchitti*'. It means that if a hand is bare from fingers to shoulder, it does not look as beautiful if when ornaments create breaks in the bare skin. This is why, when bhaktas adorn Bhagwan's image, they take great care to place the ornaments properly. A *bulaaka* is placed on the nose, and ear rings shaped like fish are placed on His ears. All these ornaments look more beautiful when they are placed on Bhagwan's image. Every part of Shri Krishna's form is the epitome of surpassing beauty.

It is not possible to describe Bhagwan's *maadhuree* (sweetness). It is impossible to describe what a bhakta feels when he looks at, or touches, Bhagwan's image. Shri Vishwanath Chakravarty has described this state of a bhakta in his 'Madhurya Kadambini'. He has written that a bhakta was doing *bhajan* (meditating lovingly on Bhagwan). He experienced a divine fragrance. All his *indreeya* (senses) – eyes, ears, skin, and tongue – came into his nose. Oh! What a sublime fragrance; a fragrance that made him forget everything else!

Just then he heard the sound of a flute, and all his senses flew into the ears. Each part of Bhagwan's form is *poorna* (complete in itself). Anklets tinkled enchantingly at His feet. Sublime effulgence filled the room. The bhakta got a *darshan* (vision) of Bhagwan. He was entranced. Bhagwan touched him with His hand. Now, all the indreeyas came into his skin at Bhagwan's touch. Bhagwan gave him some *prasaada* (sanctified food symbolizing Grace), and all the senses rushed onto the bhakta's tongue.

This is the sweetness of Bhagwan. His very name is sweetness itself! The meaning of the word 'madhur' (as sweet as honey) is, the sweetness that drips, and fills a person with delight.

Thus, Bhagwan Shri Krishna is *parama madhura* (supremely sweet). He is *madhumaya* (filled with sweetness). He is *rasamaya* (composed of sweetness). He is *laasyamaya* (a flowing sweetness). Every part of Bhagwan's form is the same, because the *dhye`ya* (object of meditation) is not insensate matter; it has the light of pure consciousness.

One *bhaavana* (feeling of love) and *chit-roopa* (form of consciousness) merge, and become *chinmaya* (filled with consciousness), and Bhagwan's *maadhuree* (sweetness) becomes extraordinary. Bhaktas savor it. Yashoda Maiya savors His sweetness with a *vaatsalya bhaava* (motherly feeling), Shri Krishna's friends – the cowherd boys – savor it with a *sakhya bhaava* (feeling of friendship), the *gopee* (milk maidens) savor it with a *madhura bhaava* (the feeling that He is their Beloved), and some savor it with a *daasya bhaava* (the love of a devoted servant). The Tattvagnani (the enlightened Mahatmas who know the essence of the Brahman) savor it with *aatma-bhaava* (the feeling that He is their own Atma; their real Self). If you have the inclination and begin to savor this rasa, everything else will seem insipid for you.

*Jo mohi raama laagate` meethe`,*

*to nava rasa shatarasa anarasa hvai jaate` saba seethe`.*

(A person who once experiences the rasa of Shri Rama finds that everything else seems insipid in comparison.)

What is there in this *prapancha* (interactive world) for a person who has not found the heavenly flavor of His sweetness?

Question: Maharajji, what is the method by which a person can do *japa* (ritual chanting) of Bhagwan's name continuously? How can we keep our mind focused on Bhagwan while doing *naama-japa* (chanting the name of Bhagwan)?

Answer: You see, sometimes the *upaaya* (method) takes you away from the *upe`ya* (that, which you wish to obtain). If you want to chant Bhagwan's name, do so with your tongue. If you go to a *yagna-shaalaa* (a place where rituals like offering oblations in the sacred fire) to obtain a method for naam-japa, or go there for *bhoga* (eating sanctified food offered to Bhagwan and distributed as His blessing) your naam-japa will be left behind. Therefore, no other method should be used to induce an unbroken stream of chanting Bhagwan's name. One should just chant His name.

Sometimes it happens that a person does not get the *rasa* (sweet flavor) of naam-japa due to *naama-aparaadha* (giving offence to Bhagwan's name). In that case, he should chant Bhagwan's name with intense fervor.

Regarding doing naam-japa while doing your routine work – when you cook a *roti* (unleavened bread) for someone, don't you think about the person for whom you are cooking it? When you sweep the floor, don't you think of the person for whose sake you want the floor to be kept clean? When you earn money to feed your loved ones, don't you think of them when you are paid?

In the same way, when you work with the thought of pleasing Bhagwan with your work, you will definitely remember Him when you do your work. There is no doubt about this. When you can think

of others as you walk with your feet and work with your hands, you can certainly think of Bhagwan while walking and working! Don't think that this is impossible; it's not. If you pay attention you can keep your mind focused on Bhagwan as you go about doing your daily work.

Question: Maharajshri, our life has become such that we face various *pare`shaanee* (irritancies; problems), no matter how hard we try to live in peace. What is the method for removing these hassles?

Answer: Doctors try to remove problems by giving a sleeping pill or injection to sedate the person and make him sleep. However, *pareshanis* are all mental. When our *mana* (emotional mind) is awake, it feels irritated by anything that is not conducive, but if a person has no *mamataa* (emotional attachment) of his own, he is less bothered by petty things. One is bothered by the things one has attachments for.

There is a feeling of 'mine' for the body – a feeling of identification with the body. A person feels that he is the body and that the body is his. Thus, *pareshani* comes neither from any object nor from any individual. It comes from our attachment and aversions, and the things they relate to. Disease is a problem because we are attached to our body and averse to suffering. A person who is prepared to give his life for Bhagwan can even jump into a fire at any time.

Thus, some problems are due to a lack of strength of mind, some due to *aham-bhaava* (identification with the body; pride), and some are due to the conviction that this interactive world is *Satya* (a Truth that can never be negated), making it extremely difficult to give it up.

However, what if you have *pre`ma* (pure love) for someone? When I was a child, the freedom fighters would say, 'I want my country to be free even at the cost of my life; even if I am hanged for it!'

I had seen one man who was too ill to get up or sit up without help. He saw a snake coming towards his bed. He got up and ran out of the room! Some people are more inclined to get hassled over even trifling matters, and some people are inclined to worry about what may happen.

To control mental weakness you should have *dharma-nishthaa* (faith in the rituals of Dharma), or Bhagwan's *aashraya* (surrender to Bhagwan), or practice Yoga (where the mind becomes detached from the world), or cut your identification with your body by obtaining Tattvagnan (Gnan about the Atma and the Brahman being one, non-dual, and the substratum of all that exists). Any of these paths will take you to the right place.

That, which is bound to leave you, is leaving you. That, which is to come in future, is coming closer, and the one who is to die, is dying. You should look at your *svaroopa* (essence; true form). Pareshanis have to be driven away.

When the Simon Commission came to Lucknow, crowds gathered and shouted, 'Simon Commission, go back!' Most of the people did not know a word of English. The Police beat them on the head and shoulders with sticks, to disperse them, but the crowds kept on shouting.

What will you call this? If you accept it as a pareshani, it is; if you don't consider it harassment, you can shake it off as unimportant. On one occasion some of us went to Babu Sampurnanandji. With us was the famous lawyer and political leader, Thakur Prasiddhanarain Singh. He was a truly noble and evolved person. Babuji was writing something when we reached. His long hair kept falling over his eyes as he wrote, and he would jerk his head back, and go on writing. While we were returning, Thakur Prasiddhanarain Singh said, 'Babaji,



if some pareshani comes into our life, we should push it away, the way Sampurnanandji jerked back the hair from his face.'

So, don't let your problems stand before you; make them things of the past. Then see how your mana is three hours later, and how it is six months later. Make your mana like that today itself. You will see that these things will no longer have the power to effect you deeply.

Question: Maharajshri, in our family life it is not possible to tell all things to all people, no matter how strong is the unity and understanding among the family members. There are always things that are not spoken between husband-wife, brother-sister, parents, and others. Even the Bhagwat mentions *koota-dharma* (the rightness of not being completely open) for a *Grihastha* (married householder). Under the circumstances, what is the *kartavya* (right thing to do) of a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant)?

Answer: It seems that the person asking this question is among those who come regularly to my discourses, because I speak on the '*Grihe`shu kootadharme`shu`*' occasionally. This episode is given in the fourth Canto of the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana (4. 25. 6).

The fact is, even the *prapancha* (interactive world) created by Bhagwan has *maayaa* (Bhagwan's power of illusion) in it. That means, Bhagwan keeps His *svaroopa* (essence; true form) partly concealed when He creates this world. In other words, Bhagwan's Maya keeps His swarup partly hidden so that this world continues to function. A man may be a *peethe`shvara* (Head of a Mutt) or a *raashtre`shvara* (Head of a Nation), or a *de`valoke`shvara* (King of the Devtas) – none of them can function without the use of Maya. When a *jignaasu* (seeker of knowledge) of Satya (the Truth that can never be negated) begins to understand this, he detaches himself from worldly interaction for a little while.

Bhagwan has made His Maya very beautiful. What am I to tell you – I find His Maya very sweet! There was a day when the *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) took Bhagwan's blessings as

he prepared to come into this prapancha. Just before leaving, he prayed to Bhagwan, 'Bhagwan, I am going into this *sansaara* (interactive world), but I am afraid that I will get trapped in it. Please use some *yukti* (method) by which I am saved from getting ensnared in the charms of Your Creation.'

Bhagwan took a little *dukha* (sorrow), a little *asatya* (falsehood), added *mauta* (death) to it, and made a mixture of the three. He sprinkled it on the jeeva's destiny, and said, 'Go, My child. Wherever you go you will get some deceit, some suffering, and the fear of death. They will vanish as soon as you come back to Me.'

That is why, when Bhagwan sent the jeeva into His Maya, He also sent the means of freeing the jeeva from it. Therefore, a person who has *pre`ma* (love) for the Satya, for the real *sukha* (happiness) and true Gnan, he sees the way people behave in this world. He cannot tell his mother everything about his wife, and he sees Bhagwan's Maya in this.

If you want to get the *darshan* (vision) of the *niraavarana satya* (naked Truth), Bhagwan has created such a world for you that you can give some serious thought to the matter, and prema for the Paramatma is sure to rise in your heart.

Continue to interact in the world, but do so wisely. Don't tell lies, but don't have the urge to always speak the truth aloud; else you'll face arguments. Some things are to be said and some things are better left unsaid. Speak, but say things that are pleasant and beneficial.

*Satyam brooyaat priyam brooyaat yo brooyaatsatyamapriyam.*

*(Manu Smriti 4. 138)*

(Speak the truth, but speak without giving offence. Do not speak the truth that hurts or harms.)

Speak, but speak sparingly. Say what is necessary, and appropriate to the occasion. Don't talk of dead bodies when you go to a wedding, and don't talk of weddings when you go to a house of mourning. If you are careful in your interaction, and if you understand that interaction always contains some degree of Maya, you will be careful about becoming free of Maya. This is a great *kripa* (Grace) of Bhagwan.

Question: Maharajshri, is it possible to be in a *sthit*i (state; condition) where no questions arise in the mind, there is no *jign*asaa (wish to know), and no expectation for *sama*adhaana (resolving perplexities)? If so, what is that sthiti? Can a bhakta attain such a state?

Answer: Tell me, my brother, if a person who is involved in *vyavaha*ara (interacting with others) has no questions, no jignasa in his life, no wish to get the solutions for the issues that trouble him from a *sat*purusha (a Mahatma established in the Satya, the ultimate Truth), or for *sat-shaa*stra (the Shatras that establishes the Satya), won't such a person be called '*jada*' (insensate matter)?

The life of a *manushya* (human being) is the life of a *vidya*artha (student, seeker of knowledge). It should contain a desire to obtain knowledge about new subjects, just like children want to know about everything. 'What is this?' they ask as they walk. I, too, would ask my father about things like the name of a bird or tree I'd not seen before. Thus, a person should have a childlike urge to know more about things all his life.

There is a description in the Upanishads about a sthiti, a Gnan –

*Aatmani khalvare`shrute`mate`vignaate`idam sarvam viditam.*

*(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4. 5. 6)*

This means, that there is a *vastu* (object) that, if you just decide to do *shrav*ana (listen to discourses on it and grasp the meaning), do *man*ana (meditate on it), and *nididhya*asana (bring your mind back

to it repeatedly), and then experience it, there is nothing more for you to know.

*Kasmin nu vignaate` sarvam vignaatam bhavati?*

Which is that Gnan, which, once obtained, gives the Gnan of everything?

That Gnan can only be obtained when you obtain the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) that your Atma is *adviteeya* (non-dual; the Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists). When nothing exists, but my Atma, my Self, what is there left for me to know? Myself?

No. Your Self is always known to you by direct personal experience, although it cannot be seen by the eye. Jignasa is for even the superimposed things (everything is superimposed on the substratum that is the Brahman) that are perceived by the senses.

A man sits before you. You don't know who he is. You will have a jignasa, 'What is his name? Which village does he come from? What is his caste?' Thus, if some unknown object is before you, there will be a wish to know about it. There will be a jignasa about things that are unseen and imagined, like Swarga (Heaven) and other realms.

The Atma, however, is a direct personal experience. Nothing exists except the Atma, so there is no jignasa left once a person gets the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of his Atma. Nor are there any issue remaining that needs to be resolved. Everything is the *gnaana-svaroopaa aatmaa* (the Atma that is the essence – or true form – of Gnan).

Now, about the bhakta; if a bhakta has great faith in Bhagwan, his faith will give the samadhan of his jignasa. Vallabhacharyaji Maharaj

says that if a bhakta gets *mahaa-vishvaasa* (supreme faith) in Bhagwan, what will happen at the next moment?

Oh, what is there, just before it? Or, what is the object in front of it? He will believe it to be Bhagwan's *sankalpa* (mental resolve that this is how things should be). It is all *bhagvat-svaroopaa* (forms of Bhagwan). There, the answer to all questions will be either in *maha-vishvas* or in *mahaa-vibhooti* (supreme magnificence and all-pervading presence). Thus, there are only two places where a person has *shankaa* (doubt) and *jignasa*.

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Question: Maharajshri, it is said, '*Uttamaa sahajaavasthaa, madhyamaa dhyaana-dhaaranaa*' (the state of being in his own essential nature is the highest state. The state where he is established in meditation and focuses repeatedly on Bhagwan is the medium state). What is the meaning of 'sahjavastha'?

Answer: I will recite the complete shloka from which you have quoted.

*Uttamaa sahajaavasthaa madhyamaa dhyaana-dhaaranaa,  
adhama shaastrachintaa cha teerthayaatraadharmaadhamaa.*

(The highest state is to be established in your essential nature. The medium state is to meditate and focus your mind repeatedly on Bhagwan. Thinking of the intricacies of Dharma and going to holy places of pilgrimage is the lower state.)

It is possible that you have not read the whole shloka, because everyone has a partiality for some Shastra (ancient books of religion), and teerthas (pilgrim places).

Regarding the *sahaja avasthaa* (natural state), it is not a sahaj avastha when a person feels irritation. 'I was to do this, but I haven't done it yet.' Or, 'My aim was to give this up, but I have failed,' or, 'I should have achieved this by now, but I have not done so.' A sahaj avastha is when there is no urge to do anything, get anything, leave anything, or know anything more.

Kabirdasji says:



*Santo sahaja samaadhi bhalee,  
sovata jaagata pare` utaane`,  
kahe` kabeera hama vahee thikaane`.*

(O men of God, the sahaj Samadhi, where you are untroubled by mental inclinations, is best. I remain in this state, whether I sleep, awake, or move around.)

You have no need to shut your eyes, hold your breath, go anywhere, or obtain anything, because nothing exists except the one non-dual supreme Atma.

Where is such a state?

*Jahaan jahaan chalaun soyee parikarmaa jo-jo karaun so poojaa.*

(My walking becomes a worshipful circumbulating, my every action becomes worship.)

This is Kabir Saheb's sahaj avastha.

It is useful to go for *teertha-yaatraa* (visiting pilgrim places), study, and meditate on the purport of the Shastras (ancient books of religion), etc, if you wish to attain such a state of natural ease. There are also methods for spiritual progress; they are not meaningless activities. The fruit of this is that a person obtains sahaj avastha. That is why sahaj avastha is shown as the primary, and other methods as inferior to it. Instead of forming the wrong impression about this shloka, you should understand its indication.

Question: Maharajji, if we do not get *saakshaatkaara* (a direct personal experience of the non-dual Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists) through *ve`daanta shravana* (listening to and assimilating discourses on Vedanta) in this very life, is it possible that we get *svaroopa-sthiti* (a state of being established in our essence) at the time of death because of our Vedanta shravan?

Answer: This is what the Gita says:

*Sthitvaa syaamantakaale`pi brahmanirvaanamrichhati.*

(2. 72)

(This state, of being established in the Brahman can come to a Yogi even at the time of his death.)

If this is not possible during a person's lifetime, but he attains in the last moments before dying, he attains *brahmanirvaana* (merging into the Brahman).

Vedanta, however, is not a joyful state that is obtained after death. It is not proper to think that the benefits of Vedanta will be obtained after death. As far as possible, a person should take the joy of Bhakti and Vedanta in this very life. This is the *drishta aananda* (perceptible happiness). 'Drisht anand' means, becoming *nirdvandva* (free of doubts and dilemmas), and *nirbhaya* (free of fear) in this very life, and also obtain an attitude of remaining *asanga* (unattached) and *nirlipta* (untainted) as you do your work.

In Bhakti, it is the Bhagwan's *bala* (strength) that works. So, instead of waiting for the next life, we should savor it in this very life. We

should dance with Bhagwan and sing for Him. In Bhakti, our *vritti* (mental inclinations) are always touching our *antaryaamee* (the one who abides in our heart) Atma, our supremely beloved Bhagwan. Our inclination is to never leave Him, even in our thoughts, and go anywhere else. It is this *vritti* that does *raasa-vilaasa* (dances and flirts) with Bhagwan.

It is better not to consider the fruit of Vedanta to be something unknown and remote like Swarga (Heaven), or the next birth; else you may as well get a certificate from a Padre or a fatwa from a Maulvi, or arrange with a Purohit for going to Swarga!

This is the path of Mahatmas. Maulvis, Padres and Purohits have nothing to do with it. You can see this anand here, itself. You can feel Bhagwan Shri Krishna in your heart, and see Him dance before your eyes. In this very life you can see that the interactive world you perceive contains an infinite variety of forms and names. It is filled with *sanskaara-vikaara* (good and bad subconscious tendencies), and yet nothing exists except the one, non-dual Paramatma (supreme Atma).

When you meditate in this manner, you will experience a unity in your life. You will remain inwardly detached even while interacting with others, and you will develop an attitude of equanimity.

Apart from this, all talk about *paraloka* (realms after death) should be left for the Padres, Maulvis, Purohits and Dasturs. Neither Vedanta nor Bhakti come into the category of a *majhab* (instituted religious sect). They are not meant to be achieved after death; they are meant to bestow *paramaananda* (supreme joyfulness) in this very life.

Question: Maharajshri, while in the *sushupti* (deep sleep) state, we are in a state of *advaya* (where no other exists; non-duality), and free of *dukha* (sorrow). How can we remain firmly established in this state even when in the *jaagrita* (waking) state?

Answer: The 'Yoga Darshan' mentions a *vidyaa* (technique) by which a person can use the support of *svapna* (dream state) and *nidraa* (deep sleep state), and focus his mind unwaveringly on it. That means, just as you see a dream, see Bhagwan's *leelaa* (divine play) as though you were looking at something, while fully awake.

Remain awake. You may shut your eyes if you wish, or let them remain open, and see that your *hridaya* (heart) is Vrindavan. In it, Bhagwan is lying on Yashoda Maiya's lap, smiling at her. See Him chatter with all kinds of baby talk. See Him playing with the *gvaala-baala* (cowherd boys) and flirt with the *gopee* (milkmaids). You can thus create a dream-like state while being fully awake. You can become so engrossed in it that you forget that you are awake. This state is called the '*svapnagnaanaalambam chitta*'.

Just as you are not conscious of anything when you are sound asleep, make your chitta (state of mind) *nidraa-gnaanaalamban* (supported by the Gnan of the trance). Then you will attain the Samadhi (state of deep meditation) that Yogis attain. The Samadhi may be *vitarkaalambana* (supported by argument), *vicharaalambana* (supported by thoughts), *aandaalambana* (supported by joyfulness), or *smitaalambana* (supported by Bhagwan's smile). A person is not established in his *svaroopa* (essence; true form) until it is *vive`ka-*

*khyati* (the discrimination that you believe to be true). Vivek khyati is the *praana* (life spirit) of Yoga.

A person who cannot achieve vivek khyati through all the states of a *sampragnaata samaadhi* (a state of deep meditation where the person is aware of nothing but his own existence), and he is not the *drashtaa* (witness) of a *niruddha chitta* (a state of mind where all thoughts are blocked), is in a state of complete unawareness in the deep sleep state. Yet, the *vikaara* (mental distortions) and *sanskaara* (positive subconscious impression) are retained in his mind. He experiences the same dukha when he awakes, that he felt before falling asleep. You can say that this state of deep meditation is like the deep sleep state, but the *agnaana* (absence of Gnan), vikar and sanskar – and all their different forms – in the deep sleep state are *beeja-roopa* (in seed form; dormant), and arise again when the person emerges from the Samadhi.

Use *vive`ka* (discriminate between the eternal and the transient), and know that you are the *apricchinna aatmaa* (the Atma that is not separate from anything). You are separate from all separateness. Then you will remain in the *braahmee sthiti* (established in the non-dual Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists) while awake and seeing everything around you.

As long as you have a wish to save yourself from this, you will certainly be aware of one point. And, that point is, had you obtained a real vivek about Satya and *mithyaa* (false). Had you obtained Gnan about the *rajju-sarpa* (the rope that appears to be a coiled snake), there would be no cause for you to fear the snake or run away from it! If you indeed obtain the right understanding of the Tattva (essence; true form) of this interactive world, no wish will remain to

obtain a state that is like the deep sleep state. Nor will you try to attain anything.

People attach their 'I' and 'mine' to their *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality). These people want to escape from this world. The fearless, enlightened people – like Raja Janak – do not run away from this world. Even if they do withdraw, they come to give *upade'sha* (teaching) to spiritual seekers like Raja Parikshit. The Sanakadi came to give upadesha to Naradji. Dattatreya and others came to do different kinds of *leelaa* (divine play), and become a Raja, like Ashvapati. This is such an unbroken state of being *nirdvandva* (free of doubts and dilemmas) that there is no need to for any particular place, time, form, or formlessness.

It is good that you have *pre'ma* (love) for Vedanta. You should not do only *svaadhyaya* (study it by yourself); you should do *shravana* (listen to and grasp the spiritual discourses given by Mahatmas). Svadhyaya is a part of Dharma (instituted religion). People are taught by their Guruji in a school of Vedanta. To do shravan from a Satpurusha is what removes your *bhraanti* (false understanding) and agnan.

Question: Maharajshri, how does *aham-bhaava* (the feeling of 'I') arise? Please enlighten us about its origin.

Answer: You see, one aspect is the *utpatti* (birth; creation) and one aspect is Gnan (the knowledge; awareness). The arising of the *vritti* (mental inclination; thought) of Aham-bhava cannot be the subject of Gnan.

You may have heard these words of Guru Saheb: '*Pitaa ko janma kee jaanai poota?*' (what will a son know about his father's birth?) Similarly, can Aham-bhava know its *kaarana* (cause)? It can't.

Aham-bhava is *anaadi* (without a beginning). Nobody can ever grasp when it first arose.

However, what is the *darshan* (philosophy)? The darshan is that you do not know your original *svaroop* (essence; true form). You swell up your Aham-bhava because of your *vidyaa* (learning), *buddhi* (intelligence), *dhana* (wealth), *aishvarya* (power), *jaati* (caste), etc. When the Aham sits in the car (ahankara means pride; ego) of jaati, *majhab* (religious sect), aishwarya, dhana, or vidya, and considers himself to be the owner of the car (gross physical form that is the vehicle of the ego) because of his foolishness, it becomes *ahankaara* (pride, vanity).

'*Aham karanam*' – when the 'Aham' ('I') is placed in the *anaham* (that, which is not the Self), it is called ahankara. You have accepted as your 'I', the things that are not your Self. Those who give thought to the serial order of how ahankara rises will experience the rising of Aham-bhava in the *maayopaadhika* (accompanied by Maya) Ishwara,

who uses His Maya (power of illusion), or *Prakriti* (Nature). They will also experience the *vilaya* (dissolution) in them; not the actual rising.

When we are fast asleep we are completely unaware of whether we are a Brahmin, or of what our name is, etc. When we first awaken, our mind is blank. The awareness of 'I' comes later. Therefore, just as when you awaken you are only aware of existing, and 'Aham' comes a second later, this *srishti* (world; creation) slumbers during *pralaya* (Dissolution) in which the seed of ahankara remains.

Thus, no object is created through *pramaana* (proof; establishing something), or through *dhyana* (meditation); it is only perceived. Our eyes see only the things that are already there. Our ears hear only the sound that has already vibrated into the air, and our tongue gives us the Gnan about the taste of the item we put into our mouth. So, it is a mistake to think that something new will be created through praman or Gnan.

Ahankara gets the expanse of *de'sha* (space) – it gets length and breadth. Then the awareness of *kaala* (time) comes, and after that the senses become aware of touch, appearance, flavor, fragrance, etc. Then the memory of people, events, etc comes.

Until you obtain the experience that you are one with the Parabrahm Paramatma (the supreme Brahman that is the Atma of all, and the non-dual substratum of al that exists), this *parampara* (handing down) of ahankara will continue. You will continue to be *sukhi-dukhi* (happy-sad). You will not be able to be Mukta (liberated from the cycle of rebirth, and all suffering).

Thus, there is no origin of ahankara – it sleeps and wakes. However, when you get the *bodha* (full understanding) of the *adhishtaana* (substratum) of this *prapancha* (interactive world) – while sleeping or



when awake – when you realize that it is illuminated by your own pure consciousness, you realize that it is known by you, and is known in you; not in the *shareera* (gross physical form), because the shareera is a part of the prapancha that you know to be transient. Then, you understand that the *drashtaa* (witness) and the adhishtana are all known by the one *akhanda* (unbroken) *gnaana-svaroopaa* (essence that is Gnan; the Brahman). You experience that you are the Brahm-Tattva (the essence that is the Brahman), undivided by space-time-matter.

Without this Gnan, you cannot be free of relationships. Bhagwan's bhakti (loving devotion for Bhagwan) is the means for becoming free of worldly ties. The feeling, 'this is mine', 'this is mine', 'this is mine' changes into '*Me`re` to giridhara gopaala doosaro na koyee*' (Giradhar Gopal alone is mine; I have no other). Bhakti frees us from worldly attachments and gives us the bodha that everything belongs to Bhagwan.

However, the separateness of the Aham that connects us to all the *dukha-daaridrya* (suffering-lacking) cannot be removed without the Gnan of the Paramatma, without the direct personal experience of the Brahman. So, do the *chintana* (meditation) of the Paramatma, and let go of the ahankara wherever it crops up.

Question: Maharajshri, our identification – that the *de`ha* (body) is our ‘I’, and is ‘mine’ – is considered wrong. Then, what is our relationship with our body? What is the purpose of the body? Why is it necessary to protect the body?

Answer: Just as a pot is made of clay, this entire *prapancha* (interactive world) is made of one *Tattva* (essence; basic substance), and this deha is also made of the same *Tattva*.

The best use of this deha is to use it to obtain Gnan about the Satya (Truth; the pure existence that can never be negated; the Atma that is the Brahman and the substratum of all that exists), and experience our Self as being *nirbandha* (free; unbound). The deha is, in fact, *kalpita* (assumed) in the Sat (pure existence). Its *vritti* (mental inclination; tendency) is assumed in the *chitta* (thoughts), and the different types of *sukha* (pleasures, happiness) in it are assumed in the *paramaananda* (supreme bliss). All this is mere *kalpanaa* (imagination; conjecture), but as long as the body is perceived as ‘I’, use it for doing good deeds. Develop relationships with people who are good. Have goodwill. Think good thoughts. Stay in a good condition, and know your *yatharthha* (actual) *svaroopaa* (essence; true form). Your deha will be well-utilized if you do this.

Somebody once asked Annie Besant, ‘Where does *agnaana* (lack of Gnan; ignorance) come from?’

‘No Rishikula (hermitage in olden times where young boys stayed with their Guru to serve him and learn from him) or University is needed to teach foolishness,’ she replied. ‘Ignorance and lack of

wisdom come into people by themselves. An effort is required for their removal.'

If you observe carefully, you will understand that the body for which we have *ahankara* (the subtle pride of individuality) is composed of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. The nose, ears, eyes, and stomach all seem to have empty space, but there is no space in the body; it is this deha that is in space. This earth is in space. The sun, moon and stars are in space. All these are apparent in space.

Where 'I' is concerned, it is not only in one's deha, because our body contains five or ten kilos of impure substances like urine, stool, mucous, bones, flesh, skin, etc. Who will refer to them as 'I'? Yet, our 'I' abides in it because of the way the body is made attractive.

You are not the deha, my brother; you are a Brahmin, a Sanyasi, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Parsee – this is a superficial veneer, and the 'Aham' ('I') is for this: 'my complexion is so beautiful. My voice is so melodious. My caste is superior' – these are all superimposed on the real Self.

When I was a child, I thought that nobody was more superior to a Saryuparena Brahmin (the caste of my birth). When I came to meet people of the Sanadhya, Gauda, and Saraswat castes, and heard them talk, I realized that they attach no importance whatsoever for the Saryuparena caste. Then I met the Dakshinatya Brahmins, and learnt that they consider their own caste way above all others. I once went to the Sangaveda Vidyalaya; they refused to allow me to spend the night on their premises! They treated me like an untouchable! I understood then, how foolish it is to have pride about being born in a high caste.

When we think about things from a *saarvajanika* (general) outlook, we understand that the pride that is linked to our deha is totally false.

Shri Ramana Maharshi has said, 'Ahankara is a *pishaacha* (fiend). It is a terrible monster. What is the source of its creation? It is created from the deha. Where does its *roopa* (form; appearance) stay? It stays in the deha. What does it eat? It eats the form of the deha.'

Ahankara is created from the name, appearance and actions, and stays in them, and feeds on them. Sometimes it accepts form, and sometimes it lets it go. When we think about how large ahankara is, how long and how broad, we perceive that it does not have even an inch of length or breadth. Similarly, its age is not even one moment; nor is its weight even one milligram. It is a false belief that contributes to *sanskaara-vikaara* (good-bad subconscious impressions).

This fiend, called 'ahankara', is not a real object, and yet it frightens us, gives us immense trouble, and leads us astray. It carries us into a cavern at times and up to the seventh Heaven at times. Therefore, nothing can be better than if it is driven away by Bhagwan's *darshan* (vision of a revered object), or by the Tattvagnan (knowledge of the essence) of the Paramatma, or the direct personal experience of this Satya (the non-dual pure existence that is the Brahman and the substratum of all that exists).

Question: How can we cultivate the practice of attaching our *chitta* (mental inclinations; thoughts) to the Paramatma?

Answer: Look, my brother, a person must have a desire to shift his *chitta-vritti* (mental inclinations) away from the *sansaara* (interactive world) they are presently attached to. If there is no desire to turn your thoughts away from worldly pleasures, attachments, relationships, position, respect, relatives, etc they cannot be attached to the Paramatma. Even if your mind seems to be turning towards the Paramatma, it will return very quickly to the same worldly matters.

There was a Seth (wealthy businessman). He used to organize regular *keertana* (group singing of devotional songs) at his house. When he lay on his death-bed, his family members asked him, 'Are you getting Bhagwan's darshan (vision)?'

Actually, it is not proper to keep asking questions to a semi-conscious person who is on the verge of giving up his body. He should not even be reminded of anything. We should only chant Bhagwan's name for him.

When asked about getting Bhagwan's darshan, the Seth said, 'I can see only bales of cloth.' His whole life had been spent focusing on his business. It is a great good fortune if a person can think of Bhagwan's name at the end.

You know very well:

*Janama janama muni jatana karaaheen,*

*anta raama kahi aavata naaheen.*

(Mahatmas try all their lives, but the name of Rama does not come easily at the time of death.)

It is extremely rare that Bhagwan's name comes to the tongue during the last moments. That can happen only when a person wants earnestly to shift his mind away from the *sansaara* (interactive external world).

What is this world filled with? It is filled with *janma-mrityu* (birth-death), *jaraa-vyaadhee* (old age and suffering), and *dukha* (sorrow).

If you look carefully you will see the pests in the rice and lentils when you wash them before cooking. This world is nothing that is worth considering to be our 'I' and 'mine'. When a person reflects on the evils of birth, death, old age, disease, and sorrow etc, that are an integral part of this world, he can turn his thoughts towards Bhagwan.

If you have some sorrow you should pray to Bhagwan for it to be removed. If you want to get something you can pray to Him for that. If you want to attain Gnan, pray to Bhagwan to grant you Gnan, and also that the Gnan is retained! Whatever you do, do it with Bhagwan; not with the sansara.

I believe that there are many *sajjana* (noble people), *satpurusha* (people committed to doing what is right), and *bhakta* (people who love Bhagwan) sitting here. It may not be to their liking if I talk about trivial things, but I will tell you anyway.

A man went to a Mahatma and said, 'Maharaj, I have a very bad habit. I tell lies for no rhyme or reason. Since I cannot get out of this bad habit, how can I ever get Bhagwan?'

'Oh, that is easy,' replied the Mahatma.

‘How, Maharaj?’

‘Shut your eyes and see with your mind,’ said the Mahatma. ‘Bhagwan Ramachandra is holding Court. Seated beside Him is Sitaji. Laxman, Bharat, Shatrughna and Hanumanji are all in attendance. The hall is filled with people. Go in and do your part. Tell such outrageous lies that Bhagwan starts laughing. Keep in mind that you are using your bad habit to entertain Bhagwan, to amuse Him.’

The man did so. Gradually his habit of telling lies left him, but Bhagwan remained in his thoughts.

Similarly, there was a lady who was devastated at the death of her husband. She became listless and lost all interest. She would not even come out of her room. This went on for six months. Her family members took me to meet her. When I talked to her, she said, ‘Maharaj, I am unable to think of anything except my husband.’

‘This is very good,’ I told her. ‘It means that your *mana* (emotional mind) is concentrated fully on one point. Now, focus your mind and see, Bhagwan Shri Krishna is seated on His throne, and your husband is bowing at His feet. See also that he is applying *tilaka* (an auspicious mark) on His forehead. After that, watch him place four *kismis* (raisins) in Bhagwan’s mouth. Watch carefully, and see Bhagwan savoring the flavor of the kismis. He is smiling with pleasure, and so is your husband.’

The lady began to imagine as per my description. She began to get Shri Krishna’s *darshan* (vision).

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘I can see this.’

‘Now, tell your husband to stay and serve Shri Krishna. See how Shri Krishna raises him up with both hands, and embraces him.’

What am I to tell you? Within a week or so, the lady became serene. She would sit with her eyes shut, meditating on Shri Krishna and her husband sitting together. Ultimately her husband merged into Shri Krishna, and she saw only Shri Krishna in her meditations. She became Bhagwan's bhakta.

Therefore, if you want to attach your *mana* (emotional mind) to Bhagwan, you must first shift your thoughts away from the external world, and direct them towards Bhagwan. Remain staunch in your faith that Bhagwan is all-powerful, and that He is drawing your mind towards Himself. Your desire and your faith must be true.

Then, associate with Bhagwan's bhaktas. Listen to spiritual discourses where Bhagwan's greatness is described. Do *japa* (ritual chanting) of His name. Do the *poojaa* (ritual worship) of His image. Recite *stotra* (passages) that eulogize Bhagwan, and think about His bhaktas. Your mana will get attached to Bhagwan.



Question: It has become very popular for people to organize all-night programs for worshipping Bhagawati (the Primordial Mother) in and around Delhi. The programs have a predominance of group singing of devotional songs about the Devi, but the tunes used are those of popular film songs. Frequent refreshments are served. Offerings of two, five or ten rupees are made to the Devi. Please tell me whether it is right to worship the Devi in this manner.

Answer: Well, my brother, *eemaandaaree* (integrity) must always be commended. If someone does the *aaraadhanaa* (worship) of the Devi with all sincerity, without any personal, political, or other vested interest – or a wish to belittle any other – how can I make any critical comment on it? This is an *aadhyaatmika* (spiritual) or *aadhidaivika* (pertaining to the divine) rite.

Long ago I had heard a story. A large *keertana-mandali* (group of singers of devotional songs) was going somewhere in Bengal, singing as they walked. Someone told Paramhansa Ramakrishnadev, ‘Maharaj, they sing with such heartfelt devotion!’

Tears came into Paramhansaji’s eyes.

‘Why are you distressed, Maharaj?’ asked the man.

‘Look,’ said Thakur Ramakrishnadev, ‘Just now they are doing kirtan as they walk, but when the outsiders go back to their homes at night, the core group will resume their nefarious activities. They are a band of thieves and dacoits. This group is not for pure bhakti for Bhagwan. Had it been only for Bhagwan’s bhakti, nothing could have been better.’

Later on, Ramakrishnadev spoke about the pure bhakti of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's kirtan group. They had no other thought except the Paramatma. They went around doing kirtan, to evoke love for Bhagwan in others, enduring abuses, insults, and even beatings.

About eating and drinking during kirtan, somebody told me, about a week ago, about the Press Conference that had been held to cover the Rama Leela function. Among the items served were food and drink that are forbidden by our Shastras.

However, if the mentality of people lacks imandari and they do not carry out the program with integrity, such functions will gradually cease altogether.

When any *prathaa* (social practice) becomes a *ku-prathaa* (unethical or harmful practice), and people use it as an excuse for wrongdoing, other people begin to oppose it. Somewhere or other, people display Bhagwan's bhakti with the intention of accumulating wealth; and somewhere or other they do so for political benefits. Such efforts do not last long. I have not had any occasion to participate in any such function, but people come to me and speak about these things. That is why they say, 'Whatever you do, do it with imandari. Do it for Bhagwan. Do it with bhakti. Only with integrity can you, and society, get *kalyaana* (good fortune).

Question: Maharajshri, Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara, and Mandodari were all married women. Then, why are they called the '*pancha kanyaa*' (five unmarried maidens)? And, why is it considered *pavitra* (giving purity) to remember them in the morning?

Answer: The lives of these five give us the teaching that if anyone makes a mistake, there is no need for him to become disheartened. A person can fall only when he is walking, so it is natural that:

*Gacchatah skhalanam kvaapi bavatye`va pramaadatah,  
hasanti durjanaastatra samaadadhati sajjanaah.*

A man may slip and fall while walking. Nobody should think that a man who has slipped and fallen will never get up and start walking again. Nobody should feel that a fallen man won't get Bhagwan's *kripaa* (Grace) again.

History is filled with examples of people who were not very good people, but became highly evolved later on. The episodes in the lives of Surdasji, Tulsidasji, Bilvamangala and others are well known. They did not have a lofty lifestyle earlier, but later on, by Bhagwan's *kripa*, they became great bhaktas.

Ahalya's life had a *dosha* (fault; defect), but later on she became *parama paavana* (supremely purifying). The life of Draupadi is known to all of you. She had five husbands and yet she was a *pativrataa* (devoted wife). Tara's life, too, changed greatly later on. Kunti and Mandodari's lives were also changed.

All five of them received the Ishwara's *anugraha* (Grace; compassion). Their *kalyaana* (spiritual good fortune) was not harmed

in any way whatsoever. Bhagwan showered such Grace on them that *adharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma) never touched them.

The Grihasutra has this shloka about the pancha kanyas:

*Ahalyaa draupadee taaraa kunti mandodari tathaa,  
panchakanyaa smare`n nityam mahaapataka-naashanam.*

(The sins of a person who remembers these five maidens – Ahalya, Draupadi, Tara, Kunti and Mandodari – every day, will be destroyed.)

A person who thinks of them gets the benefit of even great sins being destroyed. That means, hope rises in his life, that it is quite possible for him to obtain Bhagwan's anugraha in future. 'I may have fallen, but I should not remain in this state. Nor should I go back to the wrong things I have done. I should move ahead and reach my goal.'

These five ladies attained their supreme goal. They became symbols of inner strength for all society. By remembering them in the morning, we, too, get inner strength to face the day. Whatever mistakes we made yesterday are in the past. Bhagwan will shower Grace on us in future. He will accept us. This shloka is very useful for us to strengthen this hope and carry us forward.

There is another factor in this. People tend to think that if a person has made some mistake twenty or twenty five years ago, he will never be redeemed. It is not proper to think like this. We should never develop a prejudiced viewpoint for anyone. We should always look ahead

These five ladies are Bhagwan's *kripa-paatra* (recipients of Grace), and are Laxmiji's *ansha* (part; digit).

Question: It is said that the *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions) of the parents come into their children, but there are times when we see just the opposite. Shri Krishna's sons became so unrestrained that He could not save the Yaduvansha (the lineage of Yadu, in which Shri Krishna was born) from destruction. In the Ramcharitamanasa, Bhagwan Shri Rama has said, '*Mor darasa amogha jaga maahein*' (My darshan is amogh (unfailing). Anyone who has a vision of Me even once never fails to get liberation.) How correct is this? Hadn't the Yaduvansha children got the darshan of Shri Krishna?

Answer: Narayana! Narayana! Narayana! Narayana! This is an excellent question!

It was necessary that the people who had accompanied Shri Krishna during this Avatar to leave it when He did. Look at it from the *aadhyaatmika* (spiritual) viewpoint. The *vikaara* (distortions) like *kaama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (deluded thinking), are increasing in a person. To remove them, he adopts the methods of *dayaa* (mercy), *kshamaa* (forgiveness), *daana* (giving in charity), and *tapasya* (austerities). These virtues destroy his vikaras. Now, should these good *vrutti* (mental inclinations) be allowed to remain permanently, or should they be blocked and quieted in order to allow him to remain established in his own *svaroop* (essence; true form)? If you give some thought to this, you will grasp what I am trying to explain.

Bhagwan Shri Krishna manifested on this earth, along with His *daivee vrutti* (divine inclinations) to destroy the increasing Asuras (demonic

powers). After destroying the *aasuree vritti* (demonic inclinations) the Daivi vritti were not needed any more; they had served their purpose.

A person first uses the inclinations like compassion, friendliness, joyfulness, indifference etc to destroy his mental distortions. Then he blocks even the good inclinations and becomes established in Samadhi (deep meditation).

It is very good to give in charity, but what if charity becomes an obstacle in meditating on Bhagwan? Trying to improve society is also very good, but what if a person forgets Bhagwan in the process? Then, what will a bhakta do? A bhakta has to ultimately become established in his *svaroop*a (essence; true form).

In the same way, Bhagwan Shri Krishna first destroyed the demonic forces – meaning the vikars – by using the divine forces – meaning the good tendencies that came in the form of the Yaduvashis. When the task of destroying wickedness was completed, it was necessary to use *nirodha* (curtailing) for the good tendencies. Checking inclinations is possible only when a person sees that they are becoming unrestrained. Then, a person becomes detached from both good and bad tendencies.

The Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana says that when the vrittis clashed with each other – when the Yaduvanshis began to fight each other – both Shri Krishna and Balaramji tried to stop them. They did not succeed. The Yaduvanshis killed each other with the *e`rakee* grass and *ishika* reeds – symbols of the sword of Gnan – the way Vedanta negates all mental inclinations and tendencies.

Actually, Bhagwan alone should remain. As long as there are others, there is always trouble of some kind. Don't the *dharmaatmaa*

(people who adhere to instituted Dharma) use fear, scolding, beating and temptations to influence others?

Therefore, until only the One, *adviteeya* (non-dual) Paramatma Shri Krishna is left, it is necessary to oppose all impure inclinations.

Regarding the darshan of Bhagwan, Duryodhan also saw Bhagwan Shri Krishna. He even made a plot to capture Him and tie Him! The Asuras also came and fought in front of Shri Krishna, because whatever happens, the Paramatma is the *saakshee* (witness) who sees everything. The soldiers of the enemy got Bhagwan's darshan as they fought.

The Bhagwat also says, '*Yamiha nireekshya gataah sakhyam.*' This means, those who get Bhagwan's darshan at the time of death get the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of the *svaroopa* (essence; true form of the Atma that is not separate from the non-dual Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists).

Shishupal and Kansa both saw Shri Krishna, and their *mana* (emotional mind) was engrossed in Bhagwan. However, Bhagwan released them from their gross physical forms before He allowed them to merge into Him. Thus, people who see Bhagwan with *dve'sha* (hatred), *ghrinaa* (disgust), *upe'kshaa* (disdain) or *durbhaava* (ill-will) get *dukha* (sorrow) in their lives, but they also merge into the Paramatma after death. Those who have *pre'ma* (love) for Bhagwan are *sukhi* (happy) in this life and merge into Him when they die.

Bhagwan knew that the Daivi shakti (divine powers) that had descended along with Him would become invincible once He left this world. They would become arrogant and destructive. He felt it was better to send them off before He left.

Our vrittis start clashing when there are conflicting opinions about whether the Paramatma is *nirguna* (without attributes) or *saguna* (with attributes); *niraakaara* (formless) or *saakaara* (with form); Shiva or Vishnu.

In the same way, the time for the Yaduvanshis to leave this world came when they began to fight among themselves. Once they were destroyed, only the One, Paramatma, remained.



Question: Maharajshri, it is said that death comes at the appointed time. If that be the case, why do people speak about *akaala mrityu* (untimely death) when someone dies at a young age due to some disease or an accident? When we take the *charanamrita* (the water used for washing the feet of Bhagwan's image) in the Mandir, the priests says this shloka, '*Akala-mrityu haranam sarvavyaadhee-vinaashanam vishnupaadodaka peetvaa punarjanma na vidyate`.*' (A person who takes charanamrita is not reborn, and he is protected in this life from untimely death, and all his suffering is destroyed.) In this, what is the purport of akala mrityu?

Answer: This is the greatness of speech. The importance of charanamrita is enhanced when a priest says this shloka while giving charanamrita, and a person hears it while imbuing it.

There are several factors in a human being's *aayu* (span of life). The gross physical form is made according to the *prarabdha* (destiny created by deeds in past lives).

In the manufacturing of car tires, the design is made before the tires are made. It is the same with our body. A plan is made about how many revolutions a tire will be making before it is discarded as useless, how strong it will be, how long it will last, and how much heat and cold it will endure.

Pay attention to all three points – the form, the capacity for work, and the capacity to endure heat and cold (sorrow and happiness). It is planned how many times a person's heart will beat. That is how it is decided how many times the life breath will continue to keep the person alive. At times, the preordained matters are altered because

a person has a *bhagavadaakaara vritti* (the mental inclinations are turned towards Bhagwan). That has an effect on the body.

*Bhaavioo me`ti sakein tripuraaree.*

(Bhagwan Shankar can change a person's destiny.)

And,

*Me`tata kathina kuanka bhaala ke`.*

(Bhagwan can change bad fortune into good fortune.)

The lifespan of our body, however, is not preordained. It depends on the quantity of his heartbeats. It is said that mrityu came fourteen times to Chandradev, but he went into a Samadhi (state of deep meditation where the heart beat slows down) and did not die.

About young deaths, suppose there is a Yogi who has practiced Yoga well, but a wish crops up in his mind at the moment of death, 'I wish I had been a Prince.' This desire at the time of death will result in his being born as a Prince. His wish will be fulfilled. But, what about the Yogabhyasa he has done in his previous life? When his desire to be a Prince is fulfilled, he will be reborn as a Yogi.

Thus, the *vaasanaa* (avid desires) that are present in our *chitta* (mental inclinations) have a force, and a period of potency. The desires of the previous birth are also a factor in the span of a person's life. Prarabdha is also a factor, and there are other factors that are also involved in the formation of the body. The 'Naraka Samhita' of Ayur Veda states that seven types of causes affect the creation of our gross physical form.

Regarding akala mrityu, it may be caused by the person's prarabdha, but if he is killed by someone, the person who kills will definitely

incur the *paapa* (sin) of killing. However, if the death is caused by a natural phenomenon like lightening, the lightening incurs no *paapa*.

What is our duty towards a person who has an *akala mrityu*, if he has done no *daana* (given in charity), or Dharma (rituals prescribed by instituted Dharma), and no one puts a Tulsi leaf (a spiritual purification) or water of the holy Ganga in his mouth, and he has not even remembered Bhagwan or given thought to his *svaroop*a (essence; true form)?

The close relatives of such a person have the responsibility to do what they can, to ensure that his Atma awakens again, and gets peace. The Shastras give a number of methods for this, like giving Narayana Bali (an offering to please Bhagwan Narayana), *vrishotsarga* (buying a good quality bull and releasing him to improve the strain of cows), and other rituals and offerings.

The descriptions of untimely death are meant to remind the family members of their duty to undertake the prescribed rituals for the peace of the one who has died. When a bhakta takes charanamrita he has the comfort that he need not fear untimely death. It is to remove timidity that the practice of drinking charanamrita is made.

However, the water of charanamrita should be *shuddha* (pure, according to the Shastras). It should be offered by the proper method, and the one who drinks it should have *shraddha* (staunch faith) in his heart, that this will keep him safe.

If a man has *vishvaasa* (staunch faith) in this, he will be able to fulfill his duties properly. Therefore, the person who drinks charanamrita is benefited, and also gets the *nirde'sha* (instruction) about his duties. To say that the charanamrita is '*akaalamrityu haranam*' (remover of untimely death) is fully appropriate from this angle.

Question: Maharajshri, what is the purport of *mala-viksh`pa-aavarana* (impurities-disturbances-the curtain that hides) in Vedanta?

Answer: The first requirement of Vedanta is *antahkarana shuddhi* (purifying the antahkarana, the fourfold mind composed of *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality). This is the primary *saadhana* (method for spiritual progress).

If this is done after taking the Guru's *sharana* (refuge in the Guru; surrendering to the Guru's guidance), it is not called *saadhaanaa* (effort for spiritual progress); it becomes the *vichaara* (giving serious thought) of the *pramaana-prame`ya* (the proof – that, which is proved). A *vastu* (object) that exists from before is not created by sadhana; we get its *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) the way we see the sun and the moon with our eyes. It has no direct connection with the *karma* (actions; rituals), *upaasanaa* (worship), or Yoga.

Now, the point is, who has the desire to get the direct personal experience of the principle of Vedanta, that nothing exists, except the non-dual Brahman that is also our Atma, and the substratum of all that exists? The first point we are told is, there should be no mala in our antahkarana.

What is the mala of the antahkarana? It is not that dust from outside falls into the antahkarana. The antahkarana contains strong and mild desires of many kinds, for different worldly objects. This is called 'mala'.

It is not possible for a person who wants a thousand worldly objects to want the Gnan about the Atma. *Brahmajignaasaa* (the desire to know about the Brahman) will not be an earnest search until the antahkarana is free of all worldly desires. This is why Vedanta says that desires are impurities. Mala means a wish for any object that is in some other place, some other time, or in some other form.

The second *dosha* (fault) is called 'vikshep'. Vikshep means a *chanchala chitta* (a restless mind). When we sit to do *aatma-chintana* (meditate on the Atma), and try to understand whether this Atma is a *kartaa* (the doer), *bhoktaa* (the one who experiences the fruits of the good and bad actions), *sansaaree* (of the interactive world), *paricchinna* (a separate entity), or whether it is *shuddha-buddha-mukta* (pure-enlightened-free), a restlessness comes into the mind. The chitta becomes agitated even if the person does not want anything in the world. This restlessness of the mind is called vikshep.

It also happens that even when there is no vikshep, a person accepts some *sthati* (state; condition) and does not know his own *svaroopa* (essence; true form) properly. This fault is called 'viparyaya' (inverted order), or *aavarana*' (a covering that hides).

*Ve`daanta saadhanaa* (the method for understanding the principle of Vedanta is *shravana* = listening to and grasping discourses on Vedanta, *manana* = meditating on what you have heard, *nididhyaasana* = bringing the mind back repeatedly to the object of your meditation) can be called sadhan up to antahkarana shuddhi. Shravan is not connected to the *saadhya* (the goal of the effort). Shravan is connected to the *aparoksha saakshaatkaara* (the direct personal experience) of the *vastu* (object; the Atma; the Brahman).

This is why a true seeker has to do the shravan of the *mahaavakya* (the ultimate statements of the Vedas) from a Sadguru (a Guru established in the Satya; an enlightened personal spiritual guide). The Mahavakyas declare, 'You are the Atma (not the body) that is the non-dual Brahman, and the substratum of all that exists.'

If the person is not fully convinced about this, he should do manan. If he has viparyaya he should do nididhyasan. This cannot be called the sadhana of any vastu, *kriyaa* (action; ritual), or *bhaavanaa* (feeling). This is to experience something as it is. It is to do *vichaara* (give serious thought) with a predominance of praman-prameya, and then, ultimately, negate both the proof and that, which is proved. Proof and that which is proved are needed only as long as a person has *agnana* (absence of Gnan). There is no need for any proof – or of that, which is proved – once agnan is removed. That is why, in general, when people consider Dharma-sadhana, Upasana-sadhana, or Yoga-sadhana to be just like Vedanta-vichar, they should become a *jignaasu* (seeker of the Truth), and take the sharan of a Tattvagna Guru (a Guru who has experienced the essence of the Brahman).

Only a person who is free of mala-vikshep is eligible for Vedanta. He should also have developed the *saadhana-chatushtaya* (four attributes, *viveka* =discriminating between the eternal and the transient, *vairagya* = detachment from all worldly considerations, *shata-sampatti* = the six attributes of *shama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titiksha*, *shraddha* and *samaadhaana*, which means, mental and physical restraint, lack of interest in anything except the Ultimate Truth, endurance, faith and understanding of the philosophy), and *mumukshaa* (desire to be liberated from the cycle of rebirth). Only a person who meditates on the Tattva (essence) for removing his agnan is eligible for Vedanta.

Question: Maharajshri, The Ramcharitamanas has this *dohaa* (couplet);

*Baara-baara maangaun harashi de`hu shreeranga,  
padasaroja anapaayanee bhagati sadaa satasanga.*

(I ask You again and again, Shriranga, but please don't be irritated with me. Be pleased with me and grant me indestructible bhakti for Your lotus-feet, and that I always get the association of the Mahatmas who love You.)

In this, what is the meaning of *anapaayani* ? Please explain the essence of this to us.

Answer: You see, *pre`ma* (love) should be such that it increases by the minute.

*Cchinahi badhe` cchina hi utare` so to pre`ma na hoya.*

That, which increases one moment and reduces the next moment is not prema at all. Real prema always increases steadily. That is how love should be.

This is why bhaktas want to have bhakti that keeps growing. Bhakti means *preeti-vishishta vritti* (a mental inclination that is filled with love for Bhagwan). When the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = the subtle ego of individuality) is filled with the sweetness of love, it is called bhakti.

Unlike Yoga, bhakti does not have a predominance of *abhyaasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (detachment from worldly considerations);

nor does it need rituals like those advocated in Dharma. The mental inclination that fills the heart with love for Bhagwan, embraces Bhagwan, is called bhakti.

This bhakti should be *anapaayani* , meaning, that this bhakti has no *upaaya* (method for obtaining). Upaya can mean *naasha* (destruction), and it can also mean *hraasa* (waning). Our bhakti should be for Bhagwan's lotus-feet, and it should increase day by day. It should never reduce. This is what Tulsidasji wants, when he says:

*Aratha na dharama na kaama ruchhi gati na chahaun nirbaana,  
janama-janama rati raamapada yaha varadaana na aana.*

(I want neither wealth, nor Dharma, nor worldly objects. I don't even want to be liberated from the cycle of rebirth. The only thing I ask for is to have love for the lotus-feet of Shri Rama in my every birth.)

It is not proper, if someone has bhakti for Bhagwan and says, after listening to a *katha* (discourse) about Bhagwan's *leela* (divine play), 'The katha is an incomplete effort; but if I get Moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth), it is acceptable.' My brother, while you are listening to the katha, you are Mukta (liberated) during that period of time!

If you say that you want to do Dharma by going to a Yagnashala, where the rituals of offering oblations into the sacred fire are held, after listening to the katha, you have relegated the katha to something inadequate. Isn't listening to a katha the best thing? In the katha you listen to descriptions of Bhagwan's leela, and meditate on His *charitra* (character; nature). And, if you say that by listening to the katha you will get Swarga (Heaven) and *bhoga* (sensual pleasures) – well, my brother, don't do Bhagwan's bhakti to buy



Moksha! Bhakti is not like paying money and Moksha is not like buying sweetmeats! The purpose of bhakti is not obtaining bhoga, Moksha, or going somewhere to do Dharma! Earlier, people had bhakti for Bhagwan to obtain Gnan about Him, to make the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind, composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations and *ahankaara* = the subtle pride of individuality) strong. It was not desirable to want anything worldly in lieu of bhakti.

However, with the coming of Kali Yuga (age of Kali, where wrong thinking flourishes) people's desire for bhakti has reduced; and also interest for Dharma and Moksha. The majority of people want Artha-Kama (wealth-fulfillment of desires). Artha, Dharma, Kama and Moksha are called the four Purusharthas – the principal goals of human endeavor. These people say they should get Artha in exchange of organizing, or attending, a Satsang (spiritual discourse) or Leela (acting out Bhagwan's divine play). It is a virtue of the Kali Yuga that we listen to the katha, which is also a form of bhakti, with the desire to get Artha!

Oh, my brother, Bhagwan's *bhagvatsvaroopa kathaa* (the katha that is the essence of Bhagwan Himself) is not meant to be a means for even Dharma or Moksha, leave alone Artha-Kama! One should not even want to misuse it thus. It is written in the tenth canto of the Shrimad Bhagwat:

*Na parilashanti ke`chidapavargamapeeshvara te`,  
charanasaroja-hansa-kulasangabisrishtagrihaah.*

(10. 87. 21)

Those people, whose hearts have attained love for Bhagwan's katha, and bhakti for Bhagwan, don't want even *apavarga* (release from rebirth).

When we want any other object in exchange of bhakti, our bhakti becomes like a servant; it does not remain a natural love. Therefore, may Bhagwan do *kripaa* (shower Grace) that no wish for Artha-Dharma-Kama-Moksha rises in our heart; may our bhakti for Him always be unsullied.

Bhagwan is like the Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling tree), and so is bhakti. They will grant you whatever you ask for. Even so, we should ask for only Bhagwan. Increase your bhakti through bhakti. The meaning of 'anapayani' is that bhakti should never leave us, it should never wane, and that it increases, doubling by the day and fourfold by the night. Such a bhakti is called 'anapayani'.

Question: Maharajji, Meerabai says, '*Me`re` to giridhara gopaala doosaro na koyee`*' (Giridhar Gopal alone is mine; I have no other). She also says, '*Me`ro mana raama hi raama rate`*' (My heart takes the name of Rama continuously). Why is the bhakti seen in the lives of these bhaktas called '*avyabhicharinee bhakti`*' (single-minded devotion)? Please explain this to us.

Answer: Look, Bhagwan Shri Krishna has said in the Gita,

*Maam cha yavyabhichare`na bhaktiyoge`na se`vate`.*

(14. 26)

(The bhakta who mediates on Me continuously with single-minded devotion.)

'*Avyabhichare`na`* – the single-minded devotion for Me should not be diverted for even one moment.'

*Vyabhichara`* (waywardness; being unfaithful) is used in a derogatory sense in Hindi, but differently in Sanskrit.

*Mayi chaananyayoge`na bhaktiravyabhicharinee`* (13. 10)

(Use unbroken attachment for Me to get avyabhicharini bhakti.)

Here, the meaning of '*avyabhicharini`*' is, to have bhakti only for Bhagwan, and no other. Mostly, people's bhakti has a predominance of their own individuality. We wash and wipe our body, adorn it, and do the same for everything that is connected to it. It is not like that in bhakti. Bhakti adorns and adores only Bhagwan. To apply *chandana`* (sandalwood paste) to Bhagwan's image, offer food, fan Him, and do everything for Him – so much so that we even go to the toilet in

order to serve Him without being distracted by the urge to relieve ourselves!

We should always be ready and eager to serve Bhagwan. We should present ourselves to Him in a way that is pleasing to Him.

If we are *malina* (dull or tarnished) when we go to Bhagwan, He will have to make a *sankalpa* (resolve) to remove our impurities. That will be a bother for Him. So, we should be clean, beautiful, and unsullied when we present ourselves before Him, so that He doesn't need to extend Himself to make us fit for His *se'vaa* (service). It is not proper to go to Him with uncombed hair, unclean clothes, and an unwashed body, thinking, 'Bhagwan will clean and groom me.' No; a bhakta should, as far as possible, never create work for Bhagwan. He should keep himself clean, attractive, and sweet, and then go to Bhagwan, so that Bhagwan smiles and looks lovingly at him, catches him, and hold him close to His heart.

In bhakti, it is forbidden to depend on any other than Bhagwan. A bhakta takes the support of Bhagwan alone, takes *aashraya* (refuge) only in Him, and takes Bhagwan's *sharanagati* (surrenders to His wish completely).

Manthara took Kaikeyi in her *sharana* (shelter; protection) and poor Kaikeyi was ruined because she took the sharan of a lowly person. Dashrathji took Kaikeyi's sharan. He could not fulfill his heart's desire. Bhagwan Ramachandra took the sharan of the *samudra* (sea) and His work was not done. Thus, we should take refuge in Bhagwan, who is the most superior. We should appeal to Him, and have bhakti only for Him.

In this, one big benefit is that we are saved from the *aasakti* (attachment) that we tend to develop for people, objects, and

activities. If we have love for Bhagwan, all our worldly attachments are removed.

Therefore, if we keep repeating in our heart, '*Me`re` to giridhara gopaala doosaro na koyee`*', there is no better method for becoming free of this interactive world. We should continue to fulfill our duties, and channel all our actions towards Bhagwan as an offering of love. Our attachments should not be restricted to our individuality, our family, our community, our religious sect, etc. Our attachment should be for the *paripoorna* (complete in Himself) Bhagwan. If this is done, the person's life will be free of *raaga-dve`sha* (attachments-aversions), and filled with *paramaananda* (supreme joy). Our tendency to find fault with others is an indication of the lowliness of our mind.

Goswami Tulsidasji says:

*Nija prabhumaya de`khahi jagata, ka asana karahi virodha?*

(I see the world as a manifestation of my own Prabhu; how am I to object to anyone?)

So, see Prabhu everywhere, See that everything belongs to Him. And say, in Meera's words, '*Mere` to giridhara gopaala, doosaro na koyee.`*'

Question: Maharajshri, the life of Shri Krishna Bhagwan is filled with *chamatkaara* (miraculous deeds). For example, the doors of the prison opening automatically at His birth, His killing the *raakshasee* (demoness) Putana when He was just a few days old, His lifting the Govardhan (a mountain) when He was seven, His walking into the mouth and stomach of the giant serpent Aghasura, etc. What was the purpose of these miraculous incidents? Please tell us why He made these miracles the basis of His *leelaa* (divine play).

Answer: I am glad that you consider Bhagwan Shri Krishna to be just like yourself, and see *chamatkara* in His *leelas*!

You see, all bonds are broken automatically when Bhagwan is to manifest. Not only were Vasudev's handcuffs and ankle-bands opened, the doors of the prison also opened.

Let Bhagwan come into your house, into your *hridaya* (heart), then see how all your worldly bondage gets cut away automatically. Do you think bondage remains, once Bhagwan appears in someone's house? This is not a *chamatkara*; it is the natural consequence of Bhagwan's manifesting in the heart of a person, that he is no longer tied to any worldly object.

Oh, Bhagwan is He, who is *sarvagna* (all-knowing). He is *sarva-shakti* (all-powerful), and He is supremely compassionate. You do not notice that Putana was of the Rakshasa community, habituated to eating meat and drinking blood. She was sent by Kansa to kill the baby Shri Krishna; and Bhagwan gave her *kalyaana* (liberation from the cycle of rebirth).

Well, then, if this is what Bhagwan gives a wicked woman like Putana, can you imagine what He would give to a person who does His *bhajana* (meditates lovingly on Him), and suckles Him the way Yashoda Maiya did? Or keeps his hand lovingly on His shoulder the way the *gvaala-baala* (cowherd boys) did? Or dances and sings with Him and thinks of Him constantly, as the *gopee* (milkmaids) did? Bhagwan Shri Krishna bestows kalyana on even the worst of Rakshasas; why won't He give you kalyana? He will certainly Grace you, never doubt it.

So, don't be disheartened. Don't be depressed. Bhagwan will come into your heart also. He will suckle you. He will become your baby, too. You have to believe that Bhagwan is Bhagwan! You see, *chamatkaras* in His *leelas*, but Bhagwan does no *chamatkaras*. Everything is included in His *sahaja svaroop*a (natural essence).

Regarding the lifting up of the Govardhan; this leela of Bhagwan is most beneficial for us. Earlier, the people did the *poojaa* (ritual worship) of Indra Devta, who lived in Swarga (Heaven). Bhagwan Shri Krishna said, 'Don't do the puja of the Devtas (presiding deities; supernatural powers) who stay in Swarga. The very earth of Vraja (the area round Vrindavan), the mountains, forests, cows – all these are visible forms of the Parameshwara, so worship them instead. Don't imagine things that are unseen and unknown.' By saying this, Bhagwan Shri Krishna has left a message for us, that the *bhoomi* (earth; land) is *de`vamayee* (filled with divine forces). Before He gave us this message, people believed that the land of the Devtas was far away.

Another important point revealed by the Govardhan leela should also be noted. Elderly people tend to dismiss the opinion of youngsters, even when they say something valid. They feel that

wisdom comes with age; youngsters are immature, inexperienced, and foolish.

Nanda Baba and his companions were wise. They accepted the logical suggestions made by their children. So, they accepted Shri Krishna's proposal and gave up the puja of Indra that had been a tradition for many generations. They did the puja of the Govardhan and the cows.

This angered Indra. He ordered dense clouds to drown Vraja in heavy torrents of rain. Bhagwan Shri Krishna protected the inhabitants of Vraja with such valor that Indra had to concede defeat and ask Shri Krishna to forgive him. That is why our *neetikaara* (the wise people who formulated the rules of right behavior) have said that if even a child says something that is wise, proper and relevant, it should be accepted; but if even a Brahmin says something illogical, foolish, or wrong, it should be rejected.

Let me tell you one thing here. Pundits (people learned in the Shastras) also tell us what the situation is, according to the stars, but they do not give us the whole picture. When I speak to the highly qualified Pundits of the Mimansa school of thought, they say that the purport is different. Our ancient scholars on Mimansa believe Karma (the law of action resulting in an appropriate fruit given in future) to be of paramount importance. According to them, Devtas (divine powers) do not manifest and accept the puja done by us. They don't assume forms; they neither give nor take anything because they are pleased by our offerings.

If that is the case, what happens when we worship a Devta?



When we worship a Devta, the karma we do creates a fruit. The important factor is the karma. The all-important factor in the Poorva Mimansa philosophy is the karma; not the Devta.

That is why Shri Krishna's words in the Govardhan leela indicate the primary importance of karma. He has negated the three *guna* (tendencies that prod people into the way they act. The Sattva guna that is elevating, the Rajo guna that gives mixed tendencies and the Tamo guna that leads to deluded thinking and sloth) in His comments. Bhagwan has also described the importance of karma and negated the tri-guna.

However, there is a factor of *karunaa* (compassion) in this, and that is, when a person gets used to receiving gifts regularly, he begins to take it as his right. He gets angry if they are not given. Indra had developed arrogance about receiving this annual puja. Bhagwan showered Grace on him by breaking his arrogance.

So, keep all these points in mind. Don't focus on the fact that Bhagwan was only seven years old when He did the Govardhan leela. See Bhagwan in the form of that little boy, and then the lifting of the mountain will not strike you as a *chamatkara*. One of Bhagwan's forms is Shesha, the thousand hooded serpent on which Vishnu Bhagwan reclines. The earth is placed, like a tiny mustard seed, on one of the hoods. As soon as you accept Bhagwan's *bhagavattaa* (powers of Bhagwan) all your doubts will disappear.

Question: Maharajshri, in our philosophy we believe that Bhagwan rules this *srishti* (Creation; world), and the rules of Creation – Nature – are constant. Then, why did the Rama Rajya (the reign of Shri Rama when all was right and all were happy), established by Shri Rama Himself, disappear?

Answer: You see, the Ishwara's *vyavasthaa* (arrangements; order of things) is not unchanging. It also contains *avyavasthaa* (disruption; chaos). *Pralaya* (Dissolution) and *sthit*i (sustenance) are always linked to *srishti*. That is why the Ishwara's arrangements always include *hiraasa* (waning) and *vikaasa* (expansion), *upachaya* (growth) and *apachaya* (decline), increase and reduction. Everything is born as '*jaayate*' (birth), grows as '*vardhate*', and destroyed as '*vinashyati*' (death). If any state were to remain static, people would not believe in the Ishwara!

Bhagwan made the world such that everything is subject to change, and showed the *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) that everything changes continuously. We should, therefore, shift our *mana* (emotional mind) away from this world for a little while, and look at that, which remains unchanging.

*Ashareeram shareere`shu anavasthe`shvavasthitam,  
mahaantam vibhumaatmaanam matvaa dheero na shochati.*

*(Katha Upanishad 1. 2. 22)*

A *dheera Purusha* (steadfast person) sees that there is an *ashareeree* (one who has no gross physical form) among all the different

*shareera* (gross physical forms) in this world. There is a *vastu* (object) that is *mahaana* (great), and *vibhu* (all-pervading) in all the different objects that change and have no enduring state, which is different beyond the different states; and that *vastu* is our Atma.

Thus, if nothing were to change in this *prapancha* (interactive world) nobody would get *vairagya* (detachment) for it. The scientists who are excessively attached to this world should try to find a way to prevent it from changing, otherwise, when childhood, maturity, and old age come, they will get the Gnan of the Atma-Tattva (the essence of the Atma; the Brahman), the Paramatma Tattva that is untouched by all the *avasthaa* (states of being).

It is said that once, when scientists made great progress and their numbers increased, they experimented on a person, keeping him alive for four hundred years. Even now, they keep trying to find ways to make people live longer. That man felt very happy at first, but then his parents died, his wife died, and his children died. Then, his grandchildren died. He kept shedding tears for every loved one who passed away.

So, if someone was to arrange that this changing world becomes unchanging, nobody will have a need for Bhagwan's bhakti. Nor will anyone need Atmagnan. This is why Bhagwan has deliberately made all things subject to change. If scientists ever succeed in making it an unchanging world, I congratulate them in advance!

Question: It is said that we should make our *mana* (emotional mind) as limpid as the mind of a little child. We should depend on Bhagwan as a child depends on his parents. However, when I sit to do Bhagwan's *bhajan-poojan* (meditate lovingly – do ritual worship of His image) thoughts of the bad behavior of a person twenty years ago keep coming into my mind. I start thinking about that person instead of thinking about Bhagwan. Please tell me some *saadhana* (method) that can remove this bad tendency, and I can worship Prabhu with single-minded devotion.

Answer: One Mahatma told me about a businessman who had a large godown. He first put many dirty objects into it, and later on he put in some excellent objects. When it was time to empty out the godown, the first things to come out were the good things he had put in last.

In the same way, if you can stop thinking about the things that filled your mind earlier, do so. If not, let them be. Fill your mind with all good things. The fact is, nothing is stored in the mind. The *dosha* (faults; flaws) of the mind at present are the cause of your thinking about past faults. Therefore, you should do *shravana* (listen to, and assimilate spiritual discourses) of Bhagwan's *charitra* (nature; character) to make your mana free of faults.

That, which is *paroksha* (unseen, unknown) comes into our life through shravan, unlike the things that are *pratyaksha* (experienced by the senses). Therefore, you should take Bhagwan's name repeatedly, and imagine that you see Bhagwan in the hearts of all

beings. I appeal to you to let go of all the names that have been superimposed on your mind, like Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, etc.

*Eeshvarah sarvabhootaanaam hridde`she`rjuna tishthati.*

*(Gita 18. 61)*

The Ishwara is present in the heart of all beings, including ants and worms, scorpions and snakes. He abides in the heart of elephants, cows, dogs, and sheep. Look at that Bhagwan!

There was an Acharya (Head) of a Hindu sect. I asked him what would happen to the followers of a certain *sampradaaya* (traditional religious sect) when they died.

‘They will go to Narak (Hell)’, he said.

‘My brother, they are *sadaachaaree* (honorable people who lead a decent life), *eemaandaara* (honest people with integrity), and have *vishvaasa* (staunch faith) in their Dharma. Why should they be sent to Narak?’

‘Whatever they may be,’ said Acharyaji, ‘unless they are followers of our path, they will go to Narak.’

This is the kind of conviction that has made a home in people’s minds. There is enmity between castes, enmity between countries, and enmity between groups. I feel surprised to see this. I remember an incident that took place some thirty years ago, at Jabalpur.

There was an Arya Samaji scholar in Jabalpur. His name was Satyavrata (Satyavrata means a person who always adheres to the Truth). He came to meet me. He suggested we have a theological discussion on between the followers of the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharma (orthodox Hindu philosophy). A day was fixed, and arrangements made, with a platform for the debaters.

I told him, 'My brother, both of us believe in the Ishwara. Both of us believe in the Vedas, and in sadachar.'

'Yes, that is correct.'

'Then, let us talk about what we both believe in, instead of arguing about the differences,' I suggested. He accepted my suggestion. It was agreed that we would both give discourses from our perspectives. I spoke about the greatness of the Ishwara, the purport of the Vedas, and the importance of sadachar, and so did he. In this way, we can, if we wish, avoid disputes.

So, don't embitter your heart. If you have had some unclean tendencies in the past, take it that Bhagwan is telling you, 'See for yourself how impure your mind is! Meditate on Me to make it pure. Do My bhajan.' If Bhagwan makes someone fall, it is to tell the person, 'Don't have pride, or vanity, or arrogance. Get up and go ahead on the right path.' It is not an offence if you fall, but it is an offence if you don't get up and start walking again. Every person makes mistakes in life. Don't keep sitting; holding on to your mistake. Fill your heart with benevolence and good thoughts. You will get *mangala* (good fortune). The incident of twenty years ago will fade away, and seem like a dream. If the memory comes up while you are doing bhajan, it is only to remind you to never make such mistakes in future. You have now come to Bhagwan's Durbar (Audience Hall). Think about good things, and talk about things that are good.

Question: Goswami Tulsidasji has said that nobody can cross over the *bhavaasaagara* (sea of this world) without the guidance of a Guru. People who have faith in this statement get trapped in the snares of charlatans who declare themselves to be Bhagwan, or say that they have had Bhagwan's *darshana* (vision). Everybody knows the result of this. Under the circumstances, how can we get a true Sadguru (enlightened Mahatma who will be our spiritual guide)?

Answer: If you want to obtain Gnan about any subject, you will have to call the person who has this Gnan, a Guru. If someone refuses to believe that anyone is a genuine well-wisher, considering himself to be a great Gnani, just think how proud and vain he is likely to become! It is a sign of arrogance if someone is unwilling to accept Gnan from anyone else, or take the advice of a genuine well-wisher. It is because of this *abhimana* (pride; arrogance) that people do not get a true Guru.

Now, consider another point. If you are a true seeker of Satya (the pure existence that can never be negated), how will you accept a puppet made of bones, flesh and skin, who is born at a particular time and will die in due course, to be the Ishwara? I have even seen people idolize as Bhagwan, a man who had worked for ten rupees a month when he was a youngster. People see that this boy was born just a few years ago, took a salary of ten rupees, and will indulge in all worldly activities when he becomes a man. They know that he will die one day, and yet they believe him to be Bhagwan.

It is not wrong to have *sadbhaava* (goodwill) for someone. You can worship a Shaligram (a round stone from the Gandaki river,

worshipped as Vishnu Bhagwan) with the faith that you are worshipping Bhagwan. You can believe a child or a Mahatma to be Bhagwan, and use the support of this faith to create a *bhagavadaakaara vritti* (a mental inclination for Bhagwan) in your heart. This is nurturing your *hridaya* (heart); but it is sheer folly to believe that this feeling is Bhagwan, and foolishness will certainly lead you astray.

This is one viewpoint. I will give you another viewpoint. Do you truly want to let go of this *sansara* (interactive world), and obtain Bhagwan? Take your own measure first. If you are being cheated, is it your sansara, or is it your Bhagwan? If you indeed have so much love for Bhagwan, why do you fear being cheated by this world?

A man goes to the field for his morning toilet. He knows that what he discards is dirty. Why should he be afraid that someone else may use it to fertilize their field or make some medicine out of what he has discarded? The meaning of this is that the man had no Guru who would teach him how to make his heart Bhagavadakara, nor did he feel that what he discarded was valueless.

The third point is, if you make a Guru, make sure that he is, indeed, a Guru. 'Guru' means weighty, one whose word carries weight. A Guru does not get swayed by the winds of any Party from the East, West, North or South. If he is a Guru, he will be firmly established in his beliefs and experience. A Guru is like a rock that remains unaffected by the waves that break against it. A Sadguru (Guru established in the eternal Satya; the Brahman) sees Bhagwan's *leelaa* (divine play) in all situations, good and bad, that arise and pass in this world.

I will tell you about an incident at the Gita Press, Gorakhpur. Some seventeen or eighteen straw huts had been put up during a *sankeertana yagna* (a ritual of continuous group singing of



devotional songs), where the *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirants) stayed. I was also staying in one of them. One night, one of the huts caught fire. People began to run around in panic, shouting 'Fire!'

Hanuman Prasadji came out of his room. 'Oh, bring ghee! Bring sweets!' he called. 'It is Bhagwan who has come as Agni (fire)! Welcome Him! Honor Him! Worship Him!' My brother, this is one kind of heart!

Similarly, there was a bhakta who was doing *bhajan* (singing devotional songs; thinking lovingly of Bhagwan). He saw a snake coming towards him. 'O my Beloved!' he said. 'I have been separated from you since long. You are coming to make me merge into You at last!'

A specter appeared before Sant Tukaram. He said, 'You have assumed a strange form, my Lord!' A bhakta's heart is not so paltry that he gets frightened easily. Make yourself vast. Take my suggestion and let your viewpoint correspond with Bhagwan's. What right have you, to object to what He wants? He sees all that happens, but He is not stopping the leela. Let go of the habit of objecting to His leela. Say, '*Rajee hein hum useemein, jisme` te`ree rajaa hai.*' (I am happy in whatever You choose.)

If you are a soldier, shoot with your rifle. If you are a trader, supply the public with food, clothing, and other goods in an ethical manner. If you are a clerk, do your work with diligence and integrity. If you are a Brahmin, study the Vedas. All this is right and proper, but if you want to present yourself before Bhagwan as a bhakta, stop thinking of the faults and good qualities about others.

*Anyasya                      dosha-guna-chintanamaashu                      muktvaa  
leelaakathaarasamaho nitaraam pibantu.*

(Free your mind of thoughts about the good and bad qualities of others. Drink continuously with your ears, the discourses that describe Bhagwan's sweet leelas.)

x

x

x

x

*Guna yaha ubhayana de`khiye`, de`khiya so avive`ka.*

(It is a sign of lack of discrimination about the eternal and the transient if you look at the faults and virtues of others.)

My brother, why do you concern yourself with who is cheating, and who is getting cheated? You are a bhakta of Bhagwan; enjoy the joy of bhakti!

I heard that a gentleman compiled a dictionary. One lady sent him a note, giving the number of bad words that were given in the dictionary. It was a dictionary and, as a dictionary it would have been incomplete had the bad words been omitted. The gentleman wrote back, 'Madam, you are to be facilitated for focusing on the bad words.'

Bhagwan's Creation has snakes, scorpions, cheats, and people who get cheated. You should observe your *hridaya* (heart), and make it pure.

Question: Maharajshri, can *aadhyaatmika saadhanaa* (effort for spirituality) be done while living at home with the family? If the family is unfavorable it becomes necessary to leave home, but if the family is favorable for adhyatmik sadhana, how can we do it at home?

Answer: Look, my brother, you will not be able to do sadhana if you stay with people who keep praising you! And, if you go to a comfortable air-conditioned cottage in some remote place, with a servant to tend to your needs, that will not become a sadhana for Bhagwan; it will be a *suvindhopaasanaa* (worship of your convenience)! Devdharji Sharma will remember how we used this term for such people who came to the Gita when we were with the Kalyan Pariwar at Gorakhpur!

The fact is, *vairagya* (detachment from worldly considerations) remains steady in adverse circumstances, because you will not get *aasakti* (attachment) for anything unpleasant. When the ambience at home is not favorable for your sadhana, look at the circumstances with the thought, 'Bhagwan is putting pressure on me on all sides to tell me to retreat within myself. There is no need for me to run away from home.'

Wherever you go, there will be some discomfort and inconveniences. If nothing else, the chirping of birds will become a distraction. Their droppings will irritate you. You will find people who criticize you and find fault with whatever you do. There will be people who will say you are a hypocrite.

Your *vritti* (mental inclinations) will never rise above your gross physical form if you try to do *bhajan* (sing devotional songs; focus on Bhagwan lovingly) while living amidst praise and creature comforts. You should, therefore, develop the habit of enduring the situation at home, even the taunts of your family members. Endurance is a *sadhana* on the path to obtaining Bhagwan. It is *titikshaa* (accepting discomfort without getting agitated). It is *tapasyaa* (asceticism), and it nurtures your *vairagya*.

There was a gentleman who was deaf. He kept praying to a Mahatma to grant that he regain his ability to hear, so he could listen to the Mahatma's spiritual discourses.

My brother,' said the Mahatma, 'Bhagwan has done something very good by making you deaf. You are saved from hearing all kinds of worldly talk.'

The gentleman was not comforted. He pleaded for the ability to hear. The Mahatma used his divine powers to restore the man's hearing, but warned him to keep this a complete secret. The man was true to his word, and told nobody.

When the man went home, he heard his wife say to his son, 'Your father is deaf; he cannot hear anything, but somehow you will have to explain this to him.'

'How can I explain anything to my father, when he can't hear a thing?' asked the son. The gentleman heard his family say many things about him in a derogatory manner. He went back to the Mahatma, and asked that he should become deaf again.

The fact is, a person's meditation becomes strong and enduring when his detachment is strengthened through equanimity, endurance, and tranquil acceptance of adverse circumstances.

Question: Maharajji, what is Dharma, and how should it be observed?

Answer: Manuji has given ten *lakshana* (characteristics; definitions) of Dharma.

*Dhritih kshamaa damoste`yam shauchamindriyanigrahah,  
dheervidyaasatyamakrodho dashakam dharmalakshanam.*

*(Manu Smriti 6. 92)*

(Dhriti = steadfastness, kshama = forgiveness, dama = self-control, asteya = not stealing, shaucha = purity of mind and body, indreeyas nigraha = restraining the senses, dheer = intelligence, vidya = learning, satyam = truthfulness, akrodha = control over anger. These are the ten signs of eternal righteousness.)

These ten Dharmas are meant for all human beings. To keep our emotional mind and senses under control, to forgive those who wrong us, to never take anything without the permission of the owner, etc are ten well-known rules of the Dharma Shastra. They apply to all people, everywhere.

Our ancient Shastras give instructions for the entire human race. Our Dharma is not created at any specific time in history, or by any particular Acharya (Master; founder of a sect). It is not restricted to any particular group of people. It is a universal philosophy with the good of all in mind.

*Yatobhyudaya-nihshre`yasa-siddhah – sa dharmah.*

*(Vaishe`shik Sutra 1. 1. 2)*

*Chodanaalakshanorthah dharma.*

*(Mimansa Sutra 1. 2)*

*Dhaaranaat dharmah.*

*(Mahabharata Shanti Parva 109. 11)*

*Yogyataavachhinnaa dharminah shaktire`va dharmah.*

*(Vyasa Bhashya 3. 14)*

These statements make it clear that Dharma does not mean a school of thought restricted to any sect, place, or period of time. It is meant for the whole mankind. That is why our Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Darshans, Puranas, and Itihasas like the Valmiki Ramayana and Mahabharata contain no religious teaching that cannot be applied universally. This is why the Manu Smriti says:

*E`tadde`sha-prasootasya sakaashaadagrajanmanah,*

*svam svam charitram shikshe`ran prithivyaam sarvamaanavah.*

*(2. 20)*

‘Prithivyaam sarvamaanavah’ (all the people in the world) should get the teaching of Dharma from here. This teaching is not restricted to any geographical condition or era of time. Our Shastras are not for only some *jaati* (caste; race) or *sampradaaya* (traditional religious sect). They apply to all people, everywhere. So much so that even the Ramcharitamanas – written barely five hundred years ago – contains no description of Dharma that is divisive in any way. All the injunctions of Dharma in our culture apply equally to all people.

Read this shloka from the Gita:

*Yatah pravrittirbhootaanaam ye`na sarvamidam tatam,*

*svakarmanaa tamabhyarchya siddhim vindati maanavah.*

(18. 46)

(This whole world is pervaded by that Paramatma, who is the source of the creation of all beings. A person attains the ultimate goal by worshipping Him through his natural actions and activities.)

This shloka helps us to realize that the *antaryaamee* (one who abides within the heart) of the whole world, and because of whom all beings get involved in their various activities, is the one whose worship bestows fulfillment. He is the Creator, and the Ruler. Worshipping Him makes the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = the intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankara* = subtle pride of individuality) pure, and the person becomes one with the Paramatma.

When a person sees this Creation the way the Ishwara sees it, all is well. However, when he sees it from a different viewpoint, his viewpoint becomes faulty. Therefore, we should match our perspective with that of the *paripoorna parame'shwara* (the supreme Ishwara who is complete within Himself)'s *paripoorna drishti* (holistic viewpoint). We should understand that the Parameshwara is the Creator of all, and it is He who inspires all. It must be accepted that if a person cannot see the world as the Parameshwara sees it, his viewpoint is bound to be defective in some way. That is why a *sarvavid* (all-knowing Mahatma) worships the Parameshwara with *sarvabhaava* (in every way).

*Sa sarvavid bhajati maam sarvabhaave`na bhaata.*

(Gita 15. 19)

(O Arjuna, a person who knows My essential nature worships Me continuously with his every thought and action.)

Thus, the Dharma described by our Shastras is all-pervading. It shows that any religion that obstructs people from following their religion is not true Dharma. The same point is stated in the Mahabharata.

*Bahoon yo baadhate` dharmao na sa dharmah kuvartma tat,  
avirodhee tu yo dharmah sa dharmo nripapungava.*

Bhishma Pitamah tells Yudhishtira, ‘The Dharma that does not allow another person to carry out his Dharma is not Dharma; it is *ku-dharma* (wrongdoing in the name of Dharma). The Dharma that never places obstacles in another doing his Dharma is the actual Dharma.’

The Dharma described by our Shastras is for all people, anywhere in the world. The Acharyas that come periodically – whether they are Christian, Muslim, Parsee, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist or any other, have come later in time. The Sanatan (eternal) Dharma has no beginning in time. It is handed down in an unbroken tradition, and is free of mistaken understanding and deluded thinking and sullied concepts. It is based on the advaita Gnan (the Gnan of the non-dual essence of the Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists), and is meant for all the people in this world. It is this Dharma that teaches us to restrain our personal urges and interact with others in an ethical way.



Question: Maharajshri, generally speaking, the Bhakti Shastra (the branch of knowledge about loving devotion for Bhagwan) shows three paths for obtaining Bhagwan – Dharma (instituted religion and rituals), *upaasanaa* (loving worship), and Gnan. However, to the best of my knowledge, the Gita accepts only *gnaana-nishthaa* (faith in Gnan) and *yoga-nishthaa* (faith in practicing Yoga) as the *saadhana* (methods) for obtaining Bhagwan. Is the principle of Bhakti not accepted by the Gita?

Answer: The principle of Bhakti is such that it accepts Karma Yoga (attaching ourselves to Bhagwan through our actions) and Gnan Yoga (attaching ourselves to Bhagwan by obtaining knowledge about Him). Just as ‘*Kaanaadam paanineeyam cha sarvashastraupakaarakam*’, meaning, Kanad’s Vaisheshik Darshan and Panini’s grammar benefit all the Shastras, bhakti also benefits all.

When bhakti is attached to Karma, it frees the *kartaa* (doer) of the pride of having done the work, and takes him to Bhagwan’s *sharana* (refuge). When bhakti is attached to Gnan, it purifies the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the *mana* = emotional mind, *buddhi* = intellect, *chitta* = mental inclinations, and *ahankaara* = subtle pride of individuality) of the Gnani (one who has Gnan), and makes him fit for the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of the Paramatma.

Regarding the Gita, well! The Gita starts with the words,

*Shishyaste`ham shaadhimaam tvaam prapannam*

(2. 7)

(I am Your disciple, I take refuge in You.)

That means, the Gita starts with *sharanagati* (taking refuge in Bhagwan). And, in-between, '*Yukta aaseeta matparah (6. 14)* – a Yogi is always established in Me'. According to this statement, a bhakta obtains the state of a *sthitapragna* (one who is established serenely in the Self under all circumstances) by being constantly focused on Bhagwan.

Bhagwan has also described His Avatars and their causes in the Gita. The sixth chapter described Yoga-nishtha. '*Yoginaamapi sarve`sham madgate`naantaraatmanaa (6. 47).*' That means, even among the Yogis, the highest is the one who does Bhagwan's *bhajana* (thinks lovingly about Bhagwan).

The seventh chapter describes the four kinds of bhaktas. '*Chaturvidhaa bhajante` maam ye` janaah sukritinorjuna, aarto jignaasurarthaarthee gnaanee cha bharatarshabha. (7. 16).* Four kinds of people do My bhajan. The arthtarthi who desires worldly benefits, the aarta, who seeks relief from his trouble, the jignaasu, who wants to know about Me, and the Gnani, who is enlightened.'

This shloka is given in the ninth chapter:

*Maam hi paartha yvapaashritya ye`pi syuh paapayonayah,  
striyo vaishyastathaa shoodraaste`pi yaanti paraam gatim.*

(9. 32)

(O Arjuna, anyone who takes My sharan – whether it is a woman, a tradesman, a low caste, or someone in a lowly condition, obtains the supreme state.)

Can there be a better description of bhakti than this?

The entire twelfth chapter is a wonderful description of bhakti. Bhakti is described in the thirteenth chapter as well.

*Mayi chaananyayoge`na bhaktiravyabhicharinee (13. 10).*

(By attaching your mind to Me though unbroken single-minded devotion)

*Madbhakta e`tadvignaaya madbhaavaayopapadyate` (13. 18).*

(My bhakta merges into My essence when he knows My true form.)

The fourteenth chapter says,

*Maam cha yovyabhichare`na bhaktiyoge`na se`vate`,*

*sa gunaansamateetyaitaanbrahmabhooyaaya kalpate`.*

*(14. 26)*

(The person who meditates continuously on Me with loving devotion crosses over the three tendencies of Sattva guna, Rajo guna and Tamo guna that prompt the behavior of all, and becomes fit to obtain the Brahman.)

In the same way, the Purushottam Yoga described in the fifteenth chapter also emphasizes on the importance of bhakti. Even the eighteenth chapter has a description of bhakti.

*Bhaktyaa maamabhijaanaati yaavaanyashchaasmi tattvatah,*

*tato maam tattvato gnaatvaa vishate` tadanantaram.*

*(18. 55)*

(A bhakta knows Me through supreme bhakti. Having known My essence he merges into Me.)

That means, a person attains Tattvagnan (knowledge of the essence of the non-dual Brahman that is the substratum of all that exists) through bhakti. This is why Bhagwan has said:

*Sarvadharmaanaparityajya maame`kam sharanam vraja.*

(18. 66)

‘Give up all Dharmas and come to Me alone. Take refuge in Me.’

Thus, bhakti is described even in the form of the *adhikaaree* (person eligible for bhakti). The conclusion of Arjuna’s questions in the Gita is,

*‘Karishye` vachanam tava (18. 73). I will do as You say.’*

Under the circumstances it is not proper to say that the Gita does not give due importance to bhakti. The Gita gives life to Karma Yoga and Gnan Yoga. It liberated us from worldly attachments, bestows *vairagya* (detachment) and helps us to obtain the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of Bhagwan’s essence. Bhakti is the mother of Karma, vairagya, and Gnan. It is bhakti who adopts the forms of Yashoda, Kausalya and Aditi.

The Gita gives a great deal of importance to bhakti. Commentaries on the Gita have been written by the Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Keshav Kashmiri, and Shri Vishwanath Chakravarti as well as Baladev Vidyabhushanji of the Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s sect. Purushottam Goswami and Vallabh Dikshit of Vallabhacharyaji’s sect, and Abhinav Gupta and Rajanak Ramkantha of the Kashmiri Shaivas have also written commentaries on the Gita. They all represent different schools of thought, but they accept bhakti in the Gita whether they belong to the Bhakti

Sampradaya (tradition) or Yoga Sampradaya. So much so, that even Shankaracharya bhagwan's commentary on the Gita begins with:

*Naaraayanah parodhyaktaad andamavyaktamsambhavam.*

Starting with the name of Narayana, he has unhesitatingly given beautiful descriptions of bhakti at every suitable point. Therefore, it is not correct to say that bhakti is not represented strongly in the Gita.

The Gita describes the Bhakti Yoga which gives life to all. Read the Gita with great love, and have faith that the Gita is the speech of Bhagwan, and the bestower of Bhagwan.

Question: Maharajshri, our present education system has little scope for giving the teaching about Dharma. The result is that *vikriti* (mental distortions and moral deterioration) are increasing in our society. How can this be rectified?

Answer: The only way to remove the unsavory tendencies in society is for the people in charge of formulating the education system to understand the importance of *aadhyaatmika* (pertaining to the spiritual) teaching, and inculcate it into the system.

The fact is, when leaders who lack metaphysical knowledge formulate the education system, it results in having a number of defects. People are mistaken when they think that education will automatically create a cultured and ethical society. It is equally wrong to believe that people will become good when they are no longer poor. Youngsters must be taught the importance of honesty, integrity, decency, etc. They have to understand why it is essential to have self-control over the mind and senses, and to have universal benevolence. Apart from this, children need to be taught to think on the right lines, avoid becoming vain and develop pride. Only then will education achieve its greater purpose.

Education has its own *shikshaa shastra* (branch of knowledge and learning). People don't even know that there is a Shiksha Shastra in Sanskrit! It is the first among the six sections of the Vedas. In ancient times, there were many methods of teaching, like the Panini Shiksha, the Bharadwaj Shiksha, Yagyavalkya Shiksha etc, which give detailed descriptions of learning and teaching methods, grammar, pronunciation, enunciation etc. I doubt if any of them prevail today.

The Shiksha Shastra that is being used in present times is contrary to our Shatras. Nobody reads the Shrauta Sutra any more except, perhaps, a rare handful. The Griha Shastra teaches us how to live our day to day lives in the right manner, and the daily rituals to be followed. It describes the rules for the rituals from birth to death, including the mantras appropriate for every occasion. Similarly, there are the Dharma Shatras. These three are called the Kalpa Shatras.

The Kalpa Shatras say that every *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) who comes into the world in a gross physical form, goes through the same treatment as a diamond that comes out of a mine.

Every jeeva comes out of this *jada prakriti* (insensate Nature; the five elements) like a diamond, unshapely, and covered with dirt. The dirt is removed. The diamond is cleaned thoroughly and cut into shape. Then it is polished and a hole is drilled into it before it can be used as an ornament.

In the same way, when a jeeva comes out of his mother's womb it is covered with the five elements of nature. It is necessary to first do the *doshaapanayana sanskaara* (the ritual of removing the faults). The jeeva carries *vaasanaa* (avid desires) inherited from the parents, grandparents from both sides, and its own previous births. The food intake of the parents also has an effect. The ritual of doshapanyana is done to remove these faults.

The *gunaadhaana sanskaara* (the ritual of implanting good tendencies) should be done after this. We should think about the good qualities that a person should have. This is akin to the treatment given to a diamond to bring out its brilliance.

After that, if he lacks some quality, the *heenaangapoorti sanskaara* (the ritual to make up for that, which is lacking) should be done.

The teachings that develop us individually and, therefore, the whole of society, should make us competent in saving ourselves from getting trapped in attachments, aversions, and pride. This ensures that these do not prompt us into harming anyone. This is the real education. All these factors must be kept in mind when the education system is formulated.

It is not possible for the Government to do this by itself. The entire society must be conscious of it. The Government pays attention to this only when all people desire this kind of teaching for their children.

This is the age of *aandolana* (public movements); important issues are neglected unless there is a public outcry. So, if we want the children of our country to get teaching about what is ethical and spiritually elevating, it is essential that the people raise a demand for it to be inculcated in the present education system.



Question: Maharajshri, the daily routine of Bhagwan Shri Krishna is described in the Shrimad Bhagwat. Which of these is useful for us? Please explain.

Answer: Shri Krishna would wake up very early and meditate on His *brahmsvaroop*a (essence of being the Brahman) even before taking His bath. 'Nobody in the world exists but Me. I am the *svayam-prakaasha* (self-effulgent) *adviteeya* (non-dual) *saakshaat brahmn* (Brahman incarnate).' Then He would get up and complete His morning ablutions, rituals like the Sandhya Vandan, worship of the Devtas (divine powers) and *japa* (ritual chanting). After that came His daily practice of *daana* (giving in charity). This was such that it is said, '*Baddham baddham dine`dine` (10. 70. 9)*'. Shri Krishna gave huge amounts in daan every day, giving more and more.

If you adopt Shri Krishna's routine of meditating on the Brahman, it is very good. Apart from that, if you observe the morning routine of bath, rituals of purification, and worship, that is also excellent. And, if you do daan every day, what can be better than that? If you don't have the wealth to do daan, give a glass of water to a thirsty person, or offer some inexpensive food to a poor man. And, you can certainly show respect to others with sweet words.

Look back every evening, 'Have I done the daan of a little sukha (comfort or happiness) to one or two people today, or not? Have I spoken smilingly? Have I looked at people with affection in my heart? Have I spoken soothingly to people today?'

Don't think of daan only in terms of money. People who have money do not like to part with it! Give whatever you are able to give. Give

people respect, give them your goodwill. Don't show off your greatness; mingle with them as equals. All this is present in Shri Krishna's life. If you so desire, you can study this episode and follow any of His other good habits.

Question: Maharajji, Shri Shukadevji told the Shrimad Bhagwat to Raja Parikshit. After hearing the whole Bhagwat, did Raja Parikshit become *gnaana-nishtha* (established in Gnan), *bhakti-nishtha* (established in bhakti), or *ubhaya-nishtha* (established in both)?

Answer: To me, it seems that Raja Parikshit became established in all three! He has described his experience:

*Agnaanam cha nirastam me` gnaana-vignaana nishthayaa,  
bhavataa darshitam kshe`tram param bhagavatah padam.*

(12. 6. 7)

According to these words, after listening to the Shrimad Bhagwat Parikshit's *agnana* (lack of Gnan) was removed, because he got *nishthaa* (staunch faith) for Gnan and *vignaana* (understanding about the functioning of Gnan), and had the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) of Bhagwan's *parama pada* (supreme state).

The fact is, bhakti (loving devotion for Bhagwan) and Gnan are separate during the period of *saadhanaa* (while the spiritual aspirant is striving for enlightenment). When a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) experiences his *poornataa* (the wholeness of his being), bhakti and Gnan no longer seem different or separate. *Bhe`da* (differences; separateness) exists from the viewpoint of agnan. A Tattvagnani (enlightened Mahatma) sees *abhe`da* (lack of bheda) because he knows that all the apparently separate objects are superimpositions on the substratum of the non-dual essence of the Brahman.

Therefore, in the eyes of a Tattvagnani, it cannot be said that bheda exists; and in the eyes of an *agnani* (one who lacks Gnan), it cannot

be said that abheda exists. That is why Bhakti and Gnan always remain in an *anirvachaneeya sthiti* (a state that can neither be confirmed nor refuted). From one viewpoint, they can't be called separate, and from another viewpoint, they can't be called the same. Vedanta calls this 'anirvachaneeya'.

Let bhakti and Gnan be separate for you until you obtain Bhagwan. When you get the sakshatkar of Bhagwan, Gnan and bhakti will no longer seem separate.

Question: what is the difference between manan and nididhyasan?

Answer: From your question it seems that you know about *shravana* (listening to and assimilating spiritual discourses), since shravan comes before manan and nididhyasan.

In Vedanta, shravan does not mean just listening with the ears. Very few people are aware of this. In Vedanta, to do shravan means to use your intellect to grasp the quintessence of what you hear. The word 'shravan' is used in the sense of *nishchaya* (decision; coming to a conclusion).

You may, or may not have noticed that the word 'Tattva' (essence) has 'tat' and 'tva' in it. 'Tat' indicates the Paramatma, and 'tva' is an abbreviation of 'tvam', meaning, 'you, the Atma'. It indicates that the Paramatma and the Atma are one. In Sanskrit grammar, it is explained as, '*tat cha tat cha, tat cha taani te'sham bhaavah tattvam*'.

*Ve`daantaanaam ashe`shaanaam aadimadhyavasaanatah,*

*brahmaatmanyeva`va taatparyam iti dheeh shravanam bhave`t.*

Vedanta calls that intellect 'shravan', in which the person reaches the conclusion, through all six methods of ascertainment, to logically establish that the Brahman and the Atma are one. All doubts about the proof, and that, which is proved, should be removed by this shravan, and the person should come to a firm decision about the subject. However, in case any ambiguity or lingering doubts remain, they should be removed through the methods given by shravan, by doing *manana* (giving deep thought) of the subject.

There is *tarka-vitarka* (arguments – counter-arguments), and there is *manan*. *Manan* is to ponder on the matter with the intention of understanding the purport of the *shruti* (Vedas). *Tarka-vitarka* can be favorable, or it can be harmful. It can lead you completely to the wrong path. The author of ‘*Vakyapadeeya*’ has stated that no matter how intelligently and logically a person tries to decide about some *vastu* (object; the Atma), his thinking can be overturned by the arguments of another person who is more intelligent and presents a different logic. That is why a person should do *manana-chintana* (give profound thought) that is in keeping with the *shravan*, in order to remove any doubts he may have.

*Shravan* is *agnaana-nivartaka* (the remover of ignorance). *Manan* is *sanshaya-nivartaka* (the remover of doubts and dilemmas). *Nididhyasan* establishes the purport of the Vedas into the *chitta-vritti* (mental inclinations).

Even after being told that the Atma is *nitya-shuddha-buddha-mukta* (eternal-pristine-enlightened-liberated) people believe that their gross physical form makes them a Brahmin, or a Sanyasi. This becomes a *viparyaya* (regression; a false belief). *Abhyaasa* (practice; repetition) should be done for its removal.

However, a person whose *buddhi* (intellect) is *shuddha*, and he is not troubled by doubts and false beliefs attains enlightenment just by *shravan*. This is because *agnan* is removed when he listens to the *Mahavakya* (ultimate statements) of Vedanta.

Therefore, if you have any kind of uncertainty about the *shravan* you have done, and you are unable to stop negative arguments from coming into your mind, you should do *manan-nididhyasan* to remove your confusion regarding the purport of the *shravan*. This should be continued until you obtain the direct personal experience of the

Mahavakya of Vedanta, that you are not the body; you are the Atma that is not separate from the non-dual essence of the Brahman.

Question: Maharajshri, we have derived tremendous benefit from your Satsang (spiritual discourses). You will be going away tomorrow. By Bhagwan's *kripa* (Grace) we will get your Satsang again next year. I pray to you that you remain established in my heart, and bless me that I never forget you, or Bhagwan. My last question is, please tell us about that *leelaa* (divine play) of Bhagwan, which is best for our *chintana-manana* (thinking about; meditating on), by which we can rule our lives.

Answer: Look, my brother, it is not in my power to abide in your heart! You can place me there if you wish; I have no objection if you place me in your heart as an old man, a young man, or a little child. Whatever form you chose will belong to you. So, it is your task – not mine – to place me in your heart!

One thing is definite. If you want to establish anyone in your heart, establish the *saakshaat parabrahm paramaatmaa parame'shvara* (the supreme Ishwara who is the Atma of all; the Brahman incarnate). He is *paripoorna* (complete within Himself) and will make you *poorna* (complete).

Another point is that if I am to tell you of some *madhura leelaa* (sweet divine play) of Shri Krishna before I leave, I tell you truly that I find Shri Krishna supremely sweet! I find His running away from Mathura very sweet, and I find His suckling the poisoned breast of Putana very sweet indeed. His rolling in the mud is supremely sweet, and His stealing butter is an act that is sweetness itself! In the Vishnu Sahasranama (the thousand names of Vishnu Bhagwan) it is called



‘satkriti’ (an action filled with Sat – the pure existence that can never be negated).

These leelas of Bhagwan are such that they attract children, fools, and even mentally imbalanced people towards Him, and away from this interactive world. Similarly, His leela of flirting with the *gopee* (milkmaids) of Vrindavan is absolutely captivating. When Shri Krishna asks Uddhavji and Arjuna for advice about what He should do, I cannot help getting entranced by His simplicity!

It is Shri Krishna’s charming nature to give up His divine powers, His *bhagavattaa* (being Bhagwan) and magnificence, and come to the level of common people. This quality of His attracts everyone to Him. He behaves like a child when He is with children, like a young man when He is with youngsters, and like an elderly person when He is with elders. This shows His skillfulness in social interaction. Bhagwan Shri Krishna descended to the level of ordinary people so beautifully that nobody can say that He is not like us.

Once, the *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual soul) placed a question to Bhagwan. ‘Prabhu, You are *shuddha-buddha-mukta* (pristine-enlightened-liberated), but we are involved and engrossed in this world; and sometimes we do things that are wrong. That being the case, how can we meet You?’

Bhagwan replied, ‘No, I am your brother. I mingle with you and do the things you do. Don’t consider Me to be separate from you. I am your friend, and you are My friend. I can never leave you, under any circumstances, whether you are in a state of being a thief, flirting with women, trying to run away, or involved in a war – or even when Death stands before you. As you are, so am I; and as I am, so are you.’

So, the *saadhaareekarana* (making Himself like an ordinary human being), and leading a life like ours, is such a leela that I find it even more appealing than His magnificence as the Ishwara. However, if some other leela of His has filled your heart, you should dwell on that leela, and meditate on it, because every leela of Bhagwan is *mangalamayee* (the bestower of good fortune).